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Mr Mason and Mr O'Connor

'I was made to stand on my toes with my knees in a bent position and my hands out in front of me for three or four hours.' It is necessary to quote the words in which Mr Bernard O'Connor, an Enniskillen teacher, described his experiences while in the custody of the Royal Ulster Constabulary because the truth or otherwise of his account does not appear to be a central issue in the eyes of Mr Roy Mason, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. 'A tracksuit was taken by one of the interviewers and put down over my head and tied around my neck in hood style, and then my nose was blocked off and my mouth was blocked off by their hands through the tracksuit. I fainted, maybe for half a minute, maybe for five minutes.' One policeman, says Mr O'Connor, 'insisted on punching me to the back of the head while he held the front of my forehead. He would punch me until I felt his knuckles were getting too sore.' Another policeman 'insisted on punching me to the stomach at regular intervals.' After 17 hours of continuous interrogation, Mr O'Connor was seen by a doctor, who states that his examination leads to the conclusion that the man 'had been assaulted while in police custody'. Mr O'Connor went on to assert that he was ordered by RUC men to confess to terrorist activities – in legal terms to conspiracy to murder – and told that he or members of his family would be killed if he refused to do so. In fact, he has not been charged with any such offences.

This was the story told by Mr O'Connor to a BBC interviewer, and brought to the television screen in a now famous *Tonight* programme. Mr Mason has strongly criticised the BBC for transmitting the interview, and his attack has been reinforced by senior officers of the constabulary. Their attitude is understandable; they are combatants in a bitter and often disheartening contest against the IRA, and they react angrily against anything that adds to their difficulties. The Secretary of State's position is different. In conditions of direct rule, he is in effect the Governor of the Province. He has to earn confidence in his integrity from the people, Catholic as well as Protestant. Patently, he has no solution to the political *impasse* in Northern Ireland, nor has he given any sign of seeking one. This is not entirely his fault, but since this situation is of indefinite duration, he really cannot afford to forfeit trust or respect.

Mr Mason has chosen, of his own volition and indeed gratuitously, to launch a vendetta against the British media of information and the BBC in particular. He has, therefore, lost trust and respect both in Northern Ireland and among fair-minded people in Britain. Although he denies that he seeks to institute a censorship, he clearly wishes to bring about a situation in which inconvenient allegations are not published. The immediate issue is the simple one of freedom in the journalistic sphere. The BBC has a cherished reputation, rare in Europe and indeed in the world, for independence from governmental authority. At the time of Suez, for instance, it stood firm against strong pressure to suppress awkward facts and adverse comment. This reputation is immensely valuable; listeners in Russia, Uganda or South Africa believe that the BBC tells the truth, and they believe it because they hear truths unwelcome to British authority. Here is an asset which we should cast away only at great loss. For standing up to Mr Mason, the Director-General deserves nothing but applause.

The other issue is no less crucial. Certain practices, and notably the practice of physical or mental torture, are outlawed by the consensus of civilised mankind, and admit of no excuse. Details may vary, but the treatment allegedly meted out to Mr O'Connor is essentially of a kind with that which has earned Britain the condemnation of the European Commission on Human Rights, and which – so Mr Silkin has solemnly promised – should never be repeated. Informed opinion in Europe and America has ceased to see the IRA as a liberation movement or to imagine that the Ulster problem can be simply resolved, but is very far from imagining Britain's hands to be entirely clean. What was wrong in Algeria and Vietnam is wrong in Ulster. That includes the cover-up.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

One Year After Wilson

Everyone in the Commons whom I have asked can remember exactly what he was doing, this time last year, when he heard the news that Harold Wilson had resigned. And so can I, and so, I suspect, can you. We may not have been doing anything particularly interesting. We may not, like Roy Hattersley, have just landed in Bulgaria, or, like Dickson Mabon, have just recovered our senses in the dentist's chair (when they told Mabon the news, his first reaction was to ask how long he had been under the anaesthetic). Nevertheless, we remember. The assassin's bullet could not have made the occasion more singular. Even those who had been informed, months in advance, that Wilson would resign at 60, and even some of his cabinet colleagues were surprised. Denis Healey, who had just been earning the hatred of the Left in Parliament, must have been appalled at the timing. The late Tony Crosland was certainly caught off his guard. Jim Callaghan was not surprised, and nor was Nigel Dempster, but the rest of us were. We were surprised and intrigued. We instinctively rejected the explanation given, and we waited to be told the real cause of the resignation.

There were two possible reasons that sprang to mind. One was that Wilson was getting out while the going was good. The other was scandal. (We were, as you may remember, in the middle of the Thorpe affair at the time, and our minds were attuned to innuendo.) In a sense, both of the explanations have since been tried out. There *was* an economic crisis ahead. The pound *did* crash. Humiliating terms *were* demanded for an IMF loan. Labour *did* lose its majority in the Commons and the legislative programme *did* grind to a halt. And yet here we all are. It wasn't the end of the world after all. It is difficult to imagine Wilson being too scared to go on in government, if this was all he saw in his crystal ball.

The second explanation has yet to be vindicated. The papers have had a good go, however, and there are enough mysteries left to intrigue one. What was the real story about the theft of Wilson's papers? What was the real story about the South African connection? Did BOSS steal the papers? or did M16? And what about all those peerages? And what about Eastern Europe? And is it true, as Joe Haines thinks, that Wilson would have gone on at No 10 had it not been for Marcia?

These are absorbing questions for daydreamers. One might say that his resignation is the last interesting thing about Wilson. Everything else, since he left office, has lost its glitter. This is not a necessary consequence of becoming an ex-prime minister. In Wilson's case the loss of reputation has been remarkable. The reputation of Ted Heath grew quite absurdly after his defeat, so that he is now considered an Elder Statesman, the sort of chap to whom one might entrust the whole United Nations. One would not wish to go into the jungle with Heath, but one might send him in on one's behalf. Not so Sir Harold.

A year ago he was considered unique – 'a king without heir, apparent or presumptive'. 'The marks of his new prime ministership' were 'dignity and self-discipline'. He had 'come closer than any other politician in his time to an instinctive understanding of the British people'. His achievement was like that of Baldwin – he had steered the country through dangerous times, when it had sometimes appeared ungovernable. It was possible that, like Baldwin, he would be used as a scapegoat for the national decline over which he had presided, but it was more likely that, like Baldwin, he would eventually come to be appreciated for his ability to govern 'in the spirit of the times'. There was a maturity in his new style. He had reversed the trend in government – from prime-ministerial back to cabinet control. He had perhaps succeeded in turning the Labour Party into the natural party of government.

Today the chief purveyor of these views (Peter Jenkins, in this paper) has changed his mind. Wilson is considered beneath contempt. He has brought politics into disrepute. His television interview after the Haines revelations completed the process begun by his resignation honours list. He has come to look much smaller – a pathetic, henpecked, shuffling individual. He is even said by some to have physically shrunk. His parliamentary colleagues have suddenly decided he's a terrible old bore. They always knew that he had unusual talents in the field of boring, but there had previously been something heroic about it, a suspicion perhaps that it was all done on purpose. Now, as he tells them how Crossman got it all wrong in his *Diaries*, and how Lord Blake thinks that *The Governance of Britain* is the best thing since Bagehot, they can see they were mistaken.

Why did it happen? Everybody who came into contact with Wilson knew the way the show was run. There was no reason that they should be surprised by Haines's book (which, incidentally, Tony Benn thinks is a very important work, although I gather that he 'has not read the chapter on Marcia'). The resignation honours were merely a confimation of everyone's worst fears.

Surely the real reason for Wilson's loss of reputation lies in his loss of uniqueness. Heath did not have to stay around while a Conservative prime minister took over the running of the country and showed that she could do it better, or even just as well. The galling fact is that Callaghan has taken over all Wilson's supposedly unique attributes. It is strange to think of it, considering the Government's record over the past year, but at no time has Callaghan been compared unfavourably with his predecessor. Perhaps there was a feeling that the conference speech would have been better handled by Wilson, but even then there were those who found the change of style refreshing. For the rest, it is remarkable how little nostalgia there has been.

One year after Wilson, the social contract may be on the ropes, Leyland may be on the ropes, devolution may be on the ropes, we may all be on the ropes, but it doesn't seem to worry the Prime Minister unduly. There is about him the air of a man who has no fear of meeting his maker face to face. It is a quality that Wilson never possessed, a certain seraphic calm. Where has he acquired it from? It is difficult to say, but it is a valuable quality, much admired by his colleagues and adversaries. Margaret Thatcher could well do with a bit of it. Sir Keith Joseph would worry us all a lot less if he possessed it in the slightest degree. It would be the making of Benn. One cannot help feeling, however, that seraphic calm by itself will not be enough to see Labour through. Will the electorate turn out to vote for a seraph? One cannot help feeling that it is something of a reckless gamble.

And now that a large number of Labour MPs are too nervous about their futures to wish to risk anything dramatic, and now that we are getting used to a House of Commons in which the great debate of the day is over whether or not to increase the format of Hansard (answer: not), and now that we're all well rested and have begun to catch up on the latest films and shows, it is hardly likely that Callaghan is going to get much stick from his own side. Sir Harold Wilson may contemplate all this from the shadows with a certain degree of justified bitterness. How does Jim, after all, get away with so much? And why should his predecessor be despised, merely for not being unique? Let him take comfort then from reciting the words of Shakespeare's Wolsey:

> . . . I have ventured
> Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
> This many summers in a sea of glory,
> But far beyond my depth. My high-blown pride
> At length broke under me, and now has left me,
> Weary, and old with service, to the mercy
> Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.

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Wilfred Beckerman

What No-Growth Society?

Oh dear, oh dear, I thought I had finished with this absurd no-growth debate and could stick to serious work, but in view of Jeremy Bugler's article 'Towards the No-Growth Society' (NS 11 March), it seems that I had better re-enter the fray. About three years ago I wrote a book called *In Defence of Economic Growth*, partly in order to have a good excuse for not arguing any more about the subject. On account of a certain amount of newspaper and TV publicity my pro-growth views had become known to many of the sort of people that I seemed to meet on social occasions. As a result I would be accosted by people who would say: 'Ah, so *you* are that fiend Beckerman who is in favour of economic growth, are you? Well, what about Minamata, or the disappearance of the bald-headed eagle, or the way that the world is freezing up or boiling over etc. etc.?'

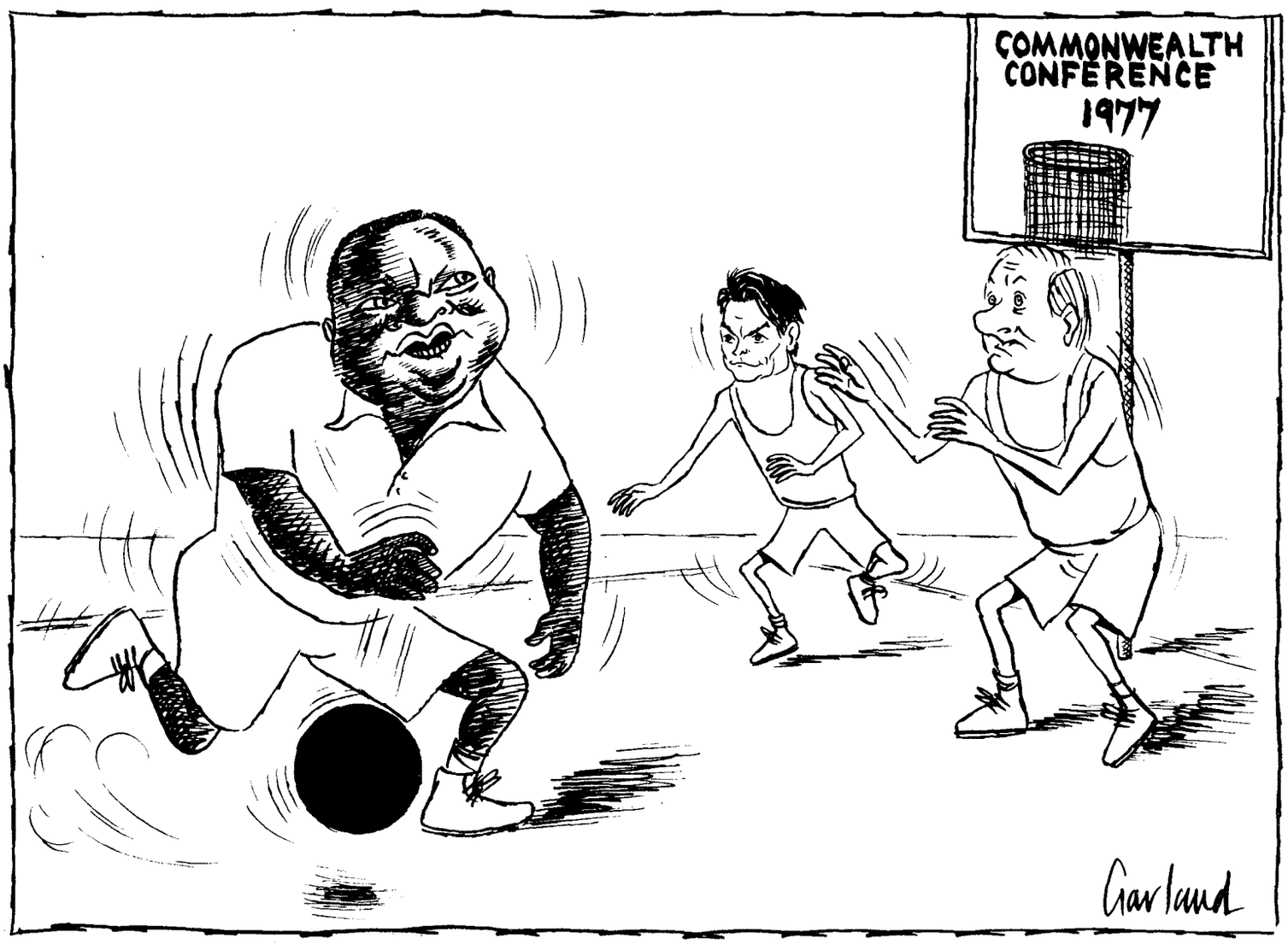
So it was a relief when I could finally reply courteously, but firmly; 'Well Madame (it was more often the wives), I think you are quite wrong, but I don't need to get down into the gutter with you and show you what a load of rubbish you are talking, for I have set it all out in a book. If you can find enough errors of fact or logic in the book I am sure that some reputable scholarly quarterly would be delighted to publish an article by you, in which case it will surely come to my attention and I will then consider how to defend myself.'

But the zero-growth merchants have been creeping back, and there is a limit to the degree of my self-denial. I did manage to pass up Mr Bugler's article on the environment in the NS last April, in which he said most of the things that I disagree with, but his latest article is too much of a provocation.

For the main point of it is not that continued economic growth is undesirable – although he is somewhat ambiguous on this issue – but that it is impossible, and so we now have to examine what sort of society will evolve in an unavoidable zero growth world. In particular, Mr Bugler has at least understood what some of us had been saying for years, namely that zero growth would impose very great strains insofar as the poorer members of society would still press for better conditions and it would no longer be possible to satisfy their demands out of a rising total. Hence, the richer members of society would either have to give in gracefully (some hope!) or fight more viciously. This, indeed, was the main reason why some of us – inspired by Anthony Crosland who had seen through the folly and hypocrisy of much of the anti-growth lobby long before anybody else – argued that economic growth was desirable. It seemed a necessary condition – if far from being a sufficient condition – for raising the share of income going to the poorer groups in society.

But the anti-growth brigade argued that continued growth was both undesirable and impossible. And, for some mysterious reason this prospect made them even more miserable. I often attempted to console them by pointing out that it would be much worse if what was undesirable was also inevitable; or if what was desirable was impossible; and that a situation in which what was undesirable was also impossible was one for rejoicing, rather than the reverse. But my shy, hesitant, attempts to comfort them always seemed just to make them even more cross.

So in the end I found it easier just to explain why they need not be worried about the impossibility of growth for it was all nonsense, especially the 'finite resources' argument which Mr Bugler parades once



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more. In case my earlier critique of this particular argument (NS 19 October 1973) is no longer entirely fresh in everybody's mind, it may be summarised as follows.

Resources are either finite or they are not. If they are not, then this alleged limit to growth disappears. If they are, then zero growth will not save us either. It may enable the human race to survive for a thousand years instead of five hundred years, but one day, the limit will still be reached. Those who want the human race to survive even longer should be advocating a cut in output; not just zero growth, but negative growth. After all, what is so sacred about the figure zero? Why not some negative growth rate like minus the square root of seven?

Those who want the human race to survive for ever should, in the interests of logical consistency, advocate cutting our use of finite resources to infinitesimally small amounts, of course, but I have never heard any of them do so. Anyway, why should one want the human race to survive indefinitely? I can see good reasons for being concerned with the welfare of all those people who are already here on Earth, or whose arrival is more or less inevitable. But apart from them, I find it difficult to attach any meaning to the notion that there is any net gain in the welfare of future generations if they are born as compared with if they are not born. It is impossible to compare the welfare of people who are here with what it would be if they had never arrived in the first place.

But, in fact, we need not worry about the consequences of Mr Bugler's proposition that '. . . material-consuming industrial expansion must at some time bang up against a limit'. And to ask, as Mr Bugler does, '. . . what happens when quantitative economic growth is no longer feasible . . .?' is rather like asking 'When will you stop beating your wife?' when the answer is 'Never'.

For it is not enough to keep pointing out, as the zero growth brigade never tires of doing, that the demands on world resources have been growing steadily throughout the ages and that the scale of their use now dwarfs that of, say, a century ago or even of 20 years ago. For exactly the same proposition holds true for the supply of resources. Hence, the rise in demand no more implies that there will be an increasing shortage than does the rise in supply imply that there will be an increasing surplus. There is overwhelming evidence for the way that increasing demands are matched by increasing supplies, in the form of new discoveries, of technological developments that enable new materials to be invented, or lower grade materials to be used, or to extract materials that were hitherto inaccessible, or to discover new sources of old materials. As I have pointed out elsewhere, some estimates suggest that the top mile of the earth's crust contains enough mineral resources to keep us going for 100 million years, and though we may not yet be able to mine a mile deep everywhere, by the time another hundred million years have gone by I'm sure we will think up something.

In fact, the only evidence produced by Mr Bugler for his gloomy assertions consists of quotations from other people who have made the same sort of assertions. Since I spend much of my life trying to teach students not to accept other people's authority for anything without very good independent reasons for doing so I am unimpressed by this technique.

For example, he tells us that the Conservation Society has argued that inescapably the profits of growth go to the entrenched, powerful sections of society, as if the fact that they say so proves that it must be true, and as if its truth would also demonstrate that none of them go to the poorer sections of society. But a casual look at the statistics or other obvious indicators shows that the standard of living of the working classes in the advanced countries has also risen considerably by comparison with the past, if not by comparison with that of the rich.

One of the necessary conditions for respecting authority is that the persons concerned should be authorities on the subject in question, not on some other subject. Hence, the fact that Charles Taylor, Professor of Political and Social Theory at Oxford, believes that economic growth must come up against some finite limit of non-renewable resources, does not impress me in the slightest. I have the greatest respect for Professor Taylor in his field, and whenever there is a difference of opinion between him and me on matters pertaining to political theory I am always inclined to be on his side. But, in the absence of his detailed evidence and reasoning, his conclusions concerning the technical economic limitations on economic growth carry no more weight with me than would those of any other layman.

Nor is it always clear what conclusions one is supposed to draw from some of the other authorities that Mr Bugler appeals to. For example, he quotes the 'law' propounded by the justly distinguished American economist, Arthur Okun, to the effect that a 4-per-cent rise in output is needed to ensure any reduction in unemployment in any year; and he goes on to warn us that this 'principle must hold for any developed industrial economy in which the drive to increase labour productivity takes place. So we charge onward, apprehensive about what lies ahead and terrified of slowing down.'

Now 'Okun's law' is not new; it has been known (in a slightly different quantitative form) to the economics profession for about 15 years or more. Its chief implication is in the context of short-term economic forecasting and demand management. Applied to the longer term it is simply saying that productivity increases – surely a rather commonplace observation! Is Mr Bugler really arguing that we have more problems because productivity increases than if it did not increase? Would he say that we would have been better off if productivity had stayed the same as it was 100 years ago?

At other times Mr Bugler seems to be simply contradicting himself. At one point he refers to the evidence produced by the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth to the effect that although the distribution of wealth has become more equal, most of the benefits have gone to those just below the top echelon and not much of it has trickled down to the bottom groups. But this is just saying that redistribution has not gone far or fast enough. This is a far cry from his subsequent assertion that 'the richer of society are growing very rich with the poorer sections bought off with marginal improvements'. Although this latter proposition is vague and ambiguous, it does seem to imply that in terms of their *shares* in total wealth, the poor have been losing out.

In other places, Mr Bugler's evidence seems to be simply irrelevant to his argument. For example, he tells us that Professor Heilbroner has suggested that the 'long-run termination of capitalism will occur within a century. . .' Whether this is true or not is beside the point. The end of capitalism is one thing; the end of economic growth is something quite different. The end of feudalism did not bring economic growth to an end; far from it, it enabled economic growth to accelerate. Perhaps the end of capitalism will do the same thing, as many people have argued.

Thus the real problems of growth today do not arise from the fact that sooner or later we will be unable to have it. Nor does the real problem of income distribution lie in the fact that it would be even more difficult to achieve greater equality if growth came to an end. For growth won't come to an end on account of the usual old stories about running out of raw materials and so on. The real problem of income distribution is how to succeed better than we have done so far in achieving greater equality *even with a growing economy*. We have not made much progress with this problem, and some useful suggestions on this subject would be worth far more than breast-beating about what we would do about equality when the sun begins to cool.

Of course, this does not mean that growth

Roger Woddis

Stick With It

British Leyland have confirmed that some new cars had parts glued together.

And did those cardboard wheels revolve
  On ketchup from the works canteen?
And was the bodywork secured
  By paper-clips or plasticine?

Was the Allegro's piston-rod
  Suspended by a wooden screw?
And was the Princess bonded there
  With Woolies' finest Super Glue?

Bring me my brake shoes and my drum!
  Bring me my strips of metal waste!
Bring me my size! O tubes of gum!
  Bring me my flour-and-water paste!

I will not cease from Araldite,
  Nor shall my Uhu leave my hand,
Till we have made a bloody mess
  Of England's tired and tacky land.

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will not come to an end, or slow down, for other reasons. The most likely reasons why growth may have to be slower during the next decade or so are economic and political, not environmental.

First, it may well be that the prolonged investment boom of the first 20 post-war years has raised the ratio of capital to labour to a point where the rate of return on new investment will stay relatively low for a time.

Secondly, failure to solve long-standing conflicts between different groups in the economy over the way that incomes are shared out is a major cause of inflation. In other words, as Brigitte Bardot is reported to have said about sex, inflation is not a problem it is a solution. It is a solution to a particular form of social conflict. Unable to solve these conflicts any other way, governments will tend to play 'safe' and run economies at lower pressures of demand in the hope that this will reduce inflation. Such policies will, of course, further dampen investment and the growth of productivity.

Thirdly, at the international level the task of finding suitable international trade and monetary arrangements that will reconcile conflicts of interest between nations has become much more difficult since the virtual US hegemony of the world's economy began to break up.

Neither of these last two conflicts awaited the alleged exhaustion of finite resources. They reflect the usual failure of society to find sane solutions to conflicting interests. Thus the real limitations on growth arise not from any conflict between Man and his environment but between Man and Man.

Mr Bugler has thus got things the wrong way round. It is not zero growth that creates a problem of conflicting interests between different groups within any country or between countries. It is the conflict of interests that may lead to slower growth, at best, or to no output at all let alone no growth. For the most likely reason why economic growth – and the human race with it – will one day come to an end is that mankind will blow itself up long before it has run out of supplies of fissile materials.

But even if growth does not slow down in the foreseeable future, the usual real problems of human society will still be with us. And if one has nothing much new to say about how to deal with these problems – of peace, tolerance, freedom, equality and justice in society, not to mention problems of housing, education, health, violence, drugs, and so on – I suppose it is tempting to give the impression that one is saying something new by discussing how such problems will look *when* we have reached the no-growth situation. But this is about as useful as discussing how Britain should improve its prospects in the World Cup when the gravitational pull on earth has fallen to that of the moon. Only when people have something to say about how to play better football whilst we still have our present gravitational pull should one listen to them.

Alexander Cockburn

Mr Callaghan's Concordat

It would be an interesting exercise for one of those minstrels of the Atlantic *entente* – Jean François Revel or Raymond Aron – to attempt one day to explain in a low clear voice to President Giscard d-Estaing what exactly passes through the mind of a New York politician in the run-up period to an election. He would have to report that for Governor Hugh Carey or – on a lower but nonetheless important level – for Donald Manes, Borough President of Queens, the political and economic stability of Great Britain or France are matters of supreme indifference when weighted against the desires of 100,000 voters in the city of New York.

He would have to add that by reason of history there are simply not enough voters of British or French extraction to carry any weight at all with the politicians of New York. He would have to conclude by arguing that the only way Governor Carey will ever welcome the Concorde into Kennedy Airport is if the plane is leased to Aer Lingus or El Al or possibly Alitalia. In which case, given some adroit ethnic maneouvring, matters could turn out very differently.

The truth, of course, is that New Yorkers have been so thoroughly 'trashed' – as the saying goes – by the rest of the United States over the last two years that the Concorde affair has come as a spendidly convenient opportunity for the locals to do some trashing themselves. Hence the relative enthusiasm with which the citizenry here has reacted to threats of virtual war by the French and slightly more prudent recriminations from the British.

'As I told the President, sir, Britain is still a world power. We too are capable of organising meaningless phone-ins. The next caller, please.'

For these last two years New York has been called the most fiscally incontinent, abandoned, indisciplined, ill-organised, prodigal, violent city in the United States. Swag-bellied businessmen in Kansas, Houston and other sanctuaries of white shoes and double-knit suits have openly called for its demise. Bankers across the country have written it off (and bankers in New York have signalled agreement by switching business to the Bahamas).

Now at last there has arrived the chance to do someone else down for a change – and feel virtuous in the process. There is scarcely a person in the Five Boroughs who has studied the results of the Concorde tests at Dulles federal airport. Those who have are generally convinced that the results are fixed anyway. But everyone knows that the Concorde is noisy and everyone in New York who spends his day listening to police sirens, subway cars crashing over defective tracks, taxi drivers honking, old people screaming as they get mugged, knows that enough is enough. The livelihoods of factory workers and subcontractors round Bristol and Toulouse do not really enter the picture. In particular they do not enter the picture for home owners round Kennedy Airport wondering how real estate values are going to hold up over the next decade.

The Concorde is dying for everyone's sins. The US airlines have not been retrofitting their jets with noise abatement devices as they should have done. They preferred the Los Angeles solution, which was simply to smash the suburb next to the airport flat and relocate the inhabitants elsewhere. As recently as 1970 John Shaffer, then the administrator of the Federal Aviation Agency, said: 'Airport noise only affects about 20 million people.' This genial attitude prevails no longer, as the Concorde promoters have found to their cost.

So it would be unwise, at the present juncture, to regard the future of the Concorde in New York as anything other than gloomy. Which is possibly why James Callaghan did not have very much to say about it publicly on his visit to Washington last week. Perhaps he felt that the traditional invocations of 'the special relationship' covered the matter adequately. Carter, somewhat abashed at the reaction to his previous off-the-cuff remarks about 'defensible borders' to Prime Minister Rabin of Israel, greeted Callaghan with remarks garnered from carefully prepared notes. It was in these notes that some thoughtful aide had inserted the remarks about the 'special relationship' which caused the British Prime Minister such pleasure.

Certainly at the National Press Club Callaghan was particularly demure on the matter of Concorde. All this douceur contrasted nicely with the hysterical ranting emanating from Paris. It does not, as I have said, look as though either approach will do too much good. But at least most people in New York now think that Concorde is a French rather than Anglo-French conspiracy – a minor boost for the old 'special relationship'.

New York

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K. R. Sundar Rajan

India on the Eve

The bluster gave way to begging. As polling day – 16 March – dawned, senior Congress Party leaders, who for almost 20 months had treated Indians as a bunch of misguided children, put on sackcloth and ashes. Defence Minister Bansilal, a strong believer in force, told an election rally that he wished to apologise for the Government's excesses since the emergency was clamped down. 'I know the people will forgive us,' he pleaded, tears welling up in his eyes. 'We are really pained that some people should have been compulsorily sterilised.' 'Our mistakes, if any, were well-intentioned,' confessed Law Minister H. R. Gokhale. Mrs Gandhi pleaded with the electorate to look upon her as 'your *sevika* (servant), your sister'. Not to be found wanting in vote-catching humility, Borooah, the party chief, said that if Congress is defeated, it would function as the President's loyal opposition. Only a few weeks earlier he had reiterated that 'Indira is India' and that 'the opposition has become irrelevant in the Indian context'.

Events moved with extraordinary speed in the few weeks before polling. In a way, the shortness of the notice they received was a blessing to the opposition parties. For a whole year Jayaprakash Narayan could not bring the non-communist parties together; in the end he performed the miracle in just a fortnight. Perhaps the most cataclysmic event from the point of the Government was the revolt of Jagjivan Ram. He attracted mammoth crowds everywhere. Although Narayan's renewed illness was a setback to the opposition campaign, on a single day his doctors received 1,000 telephone calls inquiring about his health.

In 1971, an 'Indira wave' swept the country; now, however optimistically, there is talk of a 'J.P. wave'. At least this time most observers seemed to be agreed that Congress was not going to get a big majority and that the possibility of it being defeated exists. That the arrogant Borooah should talk of a graceful exit from office was indicative of the panic which gripped Congress in the last few days. One interesting pointer of the mood in pro-government circles was the sudden somersault of newspapers which have always supported Congress and played down the opposition campaign. The editor of a leading newspaper chain who only a few weeks ago reprimanded his chief sub-editor for giving prominence to Ram's resignation later sent written instructions to his staff enjoining on them the obligation to give fair coverage to opposition speeches. G. D. Birla, India's wealthiest tycoon, who sacked the editor of his *Hindustan Times* at the behest of Congress bosses, commissioned a secret assessment of the ruling party's chances. The finding is believed to have been that at best Mrs Gandhi would get 270 seats in the house of 542 and that at worst the score could be as poor at 220. Result: the *Hindustan Times* began to look almost like a J.P. newspaper on some days.

Sanjay Gandhi's friends and admirers almost deserted him. This was very significant, considering the power he wielded for 20 months. *Blitz*, the mass circulation weekly which thundered about the 'relevance of Sanjay' week after week and ridiculed Narayan and Desai as 'the Quixote-Panza pair' and as 'India's own Knights of the Woeful countenance' started making hasty amends for its irreverence.

Of course the emergency was 'popular' with many sections at the beginning. Perhaps Mrs Gandhi could even have got away with the estimated 200,000 arrests she made in the last 20 months. Perhaps the violation of the constitution and the continued imprisonment of 20,000-odd dissidents still will not unduly disturb the conscience of voters. But during the campaign she clearly found it difficult to justify the excesses that took place in the name of discipline. If Congress does lose, it will be for three reasons: forced sterilisation, the terror launched by Congress Party hoodlums in villages, and the bulldozing of slums in cities. In states like Haryana, where Congress was very strong, one observer even said: 'This is not a general election but a referendum on forced sterilisation.'

Perhaps the best measure of Mrs Gandhi's desperation was her Ranchi speech in which she described the People's Party as 'a combination of the forces of Nazism and Fascism' and as 'the enemy of secularism'. Yet, thanks to the forced vasectomies all over the country, Hindus and Moslems have come together on a common platform to oust Congress; millions of crucial Moslem votes will be denied to Congress.

Only two things can now save Mrs Gandhi from defeat or, more likely, an indecisive victory – a wave of forgiveness or massive seduction of the voters plus large-scale intimidation. The first, on the eve of polling day, did not look particularly likely, while it is probably already too late for the second. Whether it overwhelms the citadels of Delhi's neo-Moguls or not, the 'J. P. wave' has already done a lot of good to India's democracy.

Bombay

Abdullah Malik

Pakistan after Bhutto's Victory

Yet another crisis now confronts Pakistan's Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who once described himself as a 'man of crisis'. But the present one is not, at least superficially, of his making. Ironically, it has been forced upon him by his landslide victory in the general election for Parliament held on 7 March. His Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won 154 out of the 200 contested seats, while the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) – a combination of nine parties uniting on the eve of the election – secured 37. No sooner had the election results been announced than the PNA accused the ruling party of having rigged the polls. Their newly-won parliamentary seats, the PNA announced, would be resigned, the 10 March elections to the four Provincial Assemblies, boycotted and a civil disobedience movement launched. The PNA demanded that fresh elections to Parliament be held by a newly-appointed Election Commission under the strict supervision of the army.

Mr Bhutto, as always, was quick to react. He said that under the constitution he need not have called the general election for another year and a half and that his sole object in undertaking the exercise was to strengthen the democratic process in the country. In denying the charge that the election had been rigged, he pointed to the decisive victory of the PNA in the sensitive province of the North-West Frontier and in the prestigious city of Karachi, the capital of his own home province of Sind. Nevertheless, he urged the opposition to seek redress through the legal and constitutional channels open to them.

But he also went a step further. He offered to meet the PNA leaders and discuss with them anything and everything connected with the election. His remark that he would discuss other matters, besides the election to the national parliament, led

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some observers to conclude that he might be willing to consider the reholding of elections to the Provincial Assemblies which the PNA had boycotted.

The PNA'S response to the offer has been ambivalent. The nine parties with their single electoral symbol, the plough, stormed the length and breadth of the country with a hurriedly-prepared manifesto which was soon lost among hoarse cries for the transformation of Pakistan into a truly Islamic state to be governed by the injunctions of the Holy Quran. In the 30 years since Pakistan emerged as an independent nation, this was the first general election held under a civilian government. It was a new political experience for the people. It must be said that the PPP government during its five years in office showed a distinct aversion to political processions from its opponents. Section 144 (restriction on assembly of more than five persons) had almost come to be the norm. Hence the sudden upsurge of political activity and massive parades hitting the streets with a vengeance. 'The lid is off,' a journalist remarked 'and what better entertainment is there anyway than chanting slogans and waving flags! '

Mr Bhutto's opponents, after their long exile in the political wilderness, found themselves abruptly thrown into the limelight. Somewhat surprised by the intensity of support which the opposition had gathered during the earlier phase of the campaign, Mr Bhutto countered with a succession of hurricane tours through cities and rural areas which ultimately swung the popular vote in his favour. He bore the brunt of the entire campaign singlehanded, stomping across the country tirelessly in his old familiar style. He was back to where he had started. For the opposition, attendance at their rallies was not translated into votes because the voters seem to have compared the promises and performance of the two main groupings and decided that, in the ultimate analysis, the PNA had little to offer in concrete terms apart from a virulent dislike for Mr Bhutto and his party.

The results also seem to reflect the final rejection of obscurantism, evidenced by the unprecedented turn-out of women voters. Although Mr Bhutto emphasised his party's adherence to Islam, in the public mind he represented a progressive Pakistan wedded to a socialist philosophy, and this, in the context of his labour and land reforms, accounted for the votes in the PPP's favour from workers and peasants.

However, the defeat of the opposition is not as lopsided as the number of Parliamentary seats (37) would seem to suggest. Nearly, 36 per cent of all votes cast were for the PNA – the PPP polling over 10 million and the PNA, 6 million of the total 17 million votes cast from among the 30 million registered voters. This reveals the extent to which some of Mr Bhutto's lieutenants and the party cadres had antagonised the electorate through their highhandedness and corruption. Perhaps it will now also influence the way power is exercised by the new federal and provincial governments – and possibly even serve as a brake on authoritarian trends lying just beneath the surface in Pakistani society.

Lahore

Ian Guest

The New Strong Man of Bangladesh

There are some places in Dacca where you simply don't point a camera, and one of them is outside the central jail in the old city. The jail comes as a surprise in the chaos of tiny winding streets and backed-up rickshaws. But there can be no mistaking the brooding character of a prison much in use, and the implications of the sandbags piled outside a police station opposite.

Other pitfalls await the inquisitive visitor. Perhaps they come in the form of a huge, lustrous advertisement for a Philips colour television – pretty girl, false eyelashes, the lot – which seems bizarre in a country where only 6 per cent have electricity, where illiteracy runs above 80 per cent, and where *per capita* income is less than £100 a year. Behind it stretches an innocuous, and indeed rather pleasing, park. But look a bit closer, warns your guide; and sure enough there are soldiers stripped to the waist and training fiercely. This park used to be a racecourse. Here, after nine months of murderous civil war, General Niazi, the West Pakistan commander during the war, surrendered his 90,000 crack Punjabi troops in December 1971.

The point about all this is that in Bangladesh, far from having it rammed down your throat, you tend to stumble on the fact that here is a country run by a very unfrivolous, military government, perhaps even a dictatorship. Since November 1975 Major-General Ziaur (Zia for short) Rahman has ruled Bangladesh under the titles first of deputy and then chief Martial Law Administrator, together with two other senior service chiefs. But it's unlikely that the considerable number of political prisoners – put by the Home Ministry at 62,000 a year ago – are going to split hairs over labels.

Political opponents of Zia, who postponed elections indefinitely last November, like to stress such facts. They also maintain that the spiritual genesis of his government began in this same central jail in November 1975, after a coup that may turn out to be infinitely more significant for Bangladesh than the explosion of private grudges which led to Mujibur Rahman's death three months earlier. Mujib was followed by Mustaq, his Foreign Minister, as head of state. Then in November a short-lived pro-Indian coup saw Zia (who had played a leading role in the War of Liberation against the Pakistanis) imprisoned. In short succession, more than 70 officers in the army were killed by mutinous troops, and Zia was released by Colonel Abu Taher, one-legged, also a hero of the war, and a close colleague of Zia's. Zia was propelled into the limelight as a unifying figure, whereupon he promptly had Taher arrested. After eight months in the jail, Taher was tried in secret and hanged.

Taher was a leading member of the now banned JSD socialist party. Latter-day apologists for Zia, who see political prisoners and postponed elections as an inevitable legacy of five turbulent years, maintain that Taher was advocating an officerless People's Army after the Chinese model; and that Zia acted forcefully because he feared Bangladesh could not take yet another upheaval. They also point out that martial law was inherited from Mujib. But opponents are likely to counter that it was the first ruthless action of a man whose determined rise to power marks him out as Asia's new strong man – and not someone to be taken lightly.

Little, if anything, of this surfaces when you talk politics with Bengalis. Zia. Well, yes, he's a good chap. Why? Mainly because he has set his sights on attacking the red tape, inefficiency and corruption which siphoned off a sizeable chunk of the UN's special relief operation in 1972 and plagued Mujib's administration. Bengal is, in fact, where red tape got its name; it originally referred to the British habit of tying up official documents with tape instead of files. The tape still remains. So do the endless cups of tea, the whirring fans and the charming but vacuous chit-chat. Perhaps as a result, Bangladeshis talk with genuine awe of Zia's impatience, how he bullies the lazy, office-bound bureaucrats – and neatly avoid any references to sandbags outside the central jail.

To be fair, the Bangladeshis have plenty to preoccupy them quite apart from domestic politics. Last April the Indians began diverting water (40,000 cubic feet per second) from the river Ganges at the Farraka Dam, 11 miles in from Bangladesh, in an effort to clear silt from Calcutta harbour. Bangladesh, with the level of the Ganges down by six feet during the dry winter months, appealed to India to reconvene talks which had been broken off after Mujib's death (he had, in fact, reached a satisfactory arrangement with India for sharing the all-important water of the Ganges). Then Zia took the issue to the United Nations. Bilateral talks began in Dacca, were reconvened after Christmas, and then broke off inconclusively, presenting this month's UN Conference on Water (now being held in Buenos Aires) with a striking example of just how political water can, in fact, be.

The Farraka dispute with India has frayed nerves in Dacca. Late last December two bombs exploded in the city killing several people. The round-the-clock vigil outside the radio station grew more vigilant, and rickshaws were stopped at random and searched. A five-hour curfew was more strictly enforced. On the border with India – which means all the borders except a segment with Burma which is closed anyway because of fears about the approach of the plague – 'miscreants', as they are officially termed, continued to take pot-shots at Bangladesh security forces. En-

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couraged by the authorities, the two English government-owned newspapers in Dacca continued to interpret such incidents as attempts by Mrs Gandhi to 'destabilise' Zia's regime, and a siege mentality set in.

There is no doubt about the strength of feelings about India, even though it is not uncommon for insecure governments to divert attention to an external threat. There is a fierce conviction that Mrs Gandhi is toying with Bangladesh, but very little passion about politics within Bangladesh. After the highs and lows of Mujib people are now unenthusiastic about government.

The latest coup does, though, seem to have had a decisive influence on Bangladesh's future. Zia and Taher represented divergent paths that could be taken by Asia's poorest nation. In contrast to Taher's apparent Maoism, Zia has opened the doors to foreign capital. Dour streets are now festooned with neon advertisements. The first steps have been taken to denationalise the jute industry (accounting for 80 per cent of the country's foreign exchange) which languished under Mujib's mismanagement; it has now only partly recovered thanks to a 58-per-cent devaluation of the taka in May 1975. 'Economic growth' is on everyone's lips. Aid officials themselves no longer duck quickly into their limousines. After years of pouring good money after bad, they have regained their confidence.

It is tempting to say that none of this is of much account where it really matters – in the country's 65,000 villages. Indeed, the influence of Dacca, central government, and the whole rag-bag assortment of aid agencies fades into a horizon of blue haze and yellow mustard-seed the further away one gets from the capital. No roads, only tracks across paddy fields. No electricity, only hurricane lamps. No policemen, only glorified *chowkhidars* (watchmen) trying to cope with outbreaks of *dakoitry* (gangsterism). But there *is* power and patronage aplently – wielded by the immensely powerful (and elected) chairmen of the local union councils (units of about 25,000 people). Landholdings are rarely in excess of ten acres. But there is that 41 per cent of the workforce with less than a third of an acre. Here, to the romantic, is village life as it has always been – Elysian, simple, re-echoing to the bucolic sounds of bullocks threshing rice, and smiling peasants. And here, to the cynic, is a land of ignorance, selfishness and malnutrition, ripe for land redistribution and a total reform of taxation (land tax is nominal, and less than 200,000 people out of 80 million are on the tax rolls); a land where peasants go smiling to an early grave.

Which brings us back, inevitably, to the divergence represented by Taher and Zia: Marxism versus capitalism. Did all hopes for the villages end up at the end of that rope in the central jail? There are plenty of Bangladeshis who would grind their teeth at such a polarisation and insist that there is, in fact, a middle way. First they would say create a competent rural health service: this would have the effect not only of curing and preventing illness but curbing the 3-per-cent population growth rate, because it is high infant mortality which makes village women wary of accepting family planning or sterilisation. Second, direct all resources and energies to food production, in what is after all an incredibly fertile country. Over this plan, so far from conceding all to self-sufficient communities, the central government would loom large, because apart from the cash, what is most lacking at present is an overall distribution network – to get medicines and contraceptives from Dacca to the rural health centres, and food from the villages to the towns where it is needed.

The Government has taken the first steps towards a rural health service by training several thousand para-medic family welfare workers. The skills, the people, the commitment, and even the buildings for making it work exist; after all, as one doctor pointed out to me. 'This is Bengal, not a ruddy desert.' But far more energy, money and time appears to be going into a misdirected condom-intensive saturation contraceptive programme. Indeed out in the paddy fields the Administration in Dacca is most likely to be represented by a packet of condoms which is sold illegally to children who then use them for ballons and giggle furiously when they are told what they are really meant for.

USAID, urged on by the spectre of Thomas Malthus, is due to spend $15m. out of the $17m. population aid on contraceptives, despite overwhelming evidence that most of them will either be unusued or abused. So, too, with food aid. Bangladesh is a dumping ground for surplus food and contraceptives.

It is not difficult to see why Bangladesh retains the unpleasant labels 'Malthusian nightmare' and 'basket case'. On balance, despite several excellent aid programmes (like UNICEF's village water scheme) aid is probably doing as much harm to Bangladesh as good; self-reliance is as far away as ever. This has as much to do with action taken in New Delhi and, sadly, western capitals as the sombre walls of Dacca's central jail.

Dacca

Jeremy Bugler

Fags and Fleet Street

Readers of the *Daily Mail*'s editorial on the Government's new anti-smoking measures may have been struck by the happenstance of the paper's lay-out which meant that they could see, grinning through the *Mail*'s attack on David Ennals, the heavy black type of a full page ad. for Embassy cigarettes, printed on the reverse side.

They may chortle a little more this week, remembering Ennals's harsh words about sports sponsorship by tobacco companies ('grotesque' and so on), when they see the *Mail* giving lots of space to Sunday's Race of the Champions at Brands Hatch. The motor race is jointly sponsored by the *Mail* and Marlboro cigarettes – a collective burn-up, you might say, to promote bad habits across the range of driving, newspapers and health.

Most national newspapers suffer from failing courage when they have to make up their minds about the ethics of cigarette advertising. In lean years, the tobacco companies have done newspapers very well. The nationals earned £6.2m. from tobacco advertising in 1975, and double that in 1976. Last year, in fact, newspapers did astonishingly well out of advertisements for the full range of the smoker's tackle – cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, lighters, roll-your-own papers and so on.

What would the economics of the *Daily Express* look like without the £2.88m. that tobacco ads brought in last year? And that was more than £1m. up on the tobacco revenue for the year before. The *Mail*'s coffers took £1.65m. tobacco money last year. Even the heavies have recently found how valuable the favours of tobacco companies can be. The *Guardian* more than trebled its tobacco earnings last year,, puling in £0.3m. The *Observer* earned only £17,000 from the tobacco companies in 1975 but pulled in £140,000 in 1976. The *Daily Telegraph*'s take went up many-fold, from £60,000 to £415,000. (These figures are for national display advertising and were provided by Media Expenditure Analysis Ltd.)

Adherents of the conspiracy theory might see in this extraordinary jump in advertising last year a decision by the tobacco companies to tame newspapers by making them aware that 'cigarette money' keeps the presses turning. Those hostile editorials support this thinking, though David Ennals *was* a little patronising in his advice to smokers to kick the habit. ('You feel better. You smell better. You taste better.')

Ennals, though, is certainly entitled to wear a hurt look as, in fact, his statement represented a massive climb-down. When David Owen was at the DHSS, he was proving a nuisance to the tobacco people. He wanted a new tough warning on the cigarette packs. ('Danger. Cigarettes cause lung cancer, bronchitis and heart disease'). He was being sticky about advertising. When Ennals came, the negotiations seem to have started all over again.

What has now emerged is simply a new warning inserting the word *seriously* (Smoking can *seriously* damage your health) which no smoker will take *seriously*, a ban on the high tar brands like Players No 3 and Capstan Full Strength that only one smoker in 200 buys, and an end to advertising, in two years or so, of the high tar and the middle to high tar brands that only ten smokers in a hundred buy. The most serious let-down of all, though, was Ennals's promise of a three year 'cease-fire' with the tobacco companies, particularly over increased taxes on tobacco. This will not now be pressed for again until 1980.

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STOP THE BUS CUTS!

REDUCTIONS IN BUS SERVICES AND INCREASED FARES ARE AGAINST THE PUBLIC INTEREST

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Jack Jones
speaking at Stoke-on-Trent on February 11 at the opening of the campaign

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LOBBY YOUR MP AND LOCAL COUNCILLOR

The reduced expenditure levels, if implemented, would severely damage public passenger transport, although adequate public transport services for travel to work are essential for the smooth running of industry. Mobility is also a key factor in giving working people some effective choice of employment and a degree of flexibility in the availability to industry of the full range of necessary skills when economic growth rate gets under way again. The General Council have welcomed the Government's acceptance of the fact that for the foreseeable future a large proportion of the population will continue to be wholly dependent on public transport for travelling and that public transport should be given priority in transport planning and expenditure. However, this objective cannot be achieved without firm, specific and appropriate policy measures, and sufficient financial support.

Trades Union Congress
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William Hall

Gypsies, Councils and the Act

In 1968, an Act was passed which was widely regarded as providing a humane solution to the gypsy problem. Nine years later, it is generally agreed to be a disaster. So much so in fact, that the Department of the Environment have asked John Cripps, chairman of the Countryside Commission, to prepare a paper on its failings which is to be published on 6 April. The Act was supposed to establish a network of official campsites throughout the country so that gypsies could continue their way of life free from the friction which had bedevilled their relationship with the rest of the community. For the most part, those sites have not been provided. Disputes involving gypsies, it is said, continue to be the most widely covered stories in local newspapers. More important, and despite an Act that was meant to help them, at least 6,000 gypsy families are forced to break the law – and therefore endure harassment – every day at any time they stop anywhere.

The Act ostensibly made the duties of local authorities clear: metropolitan counties should provide 'at least 15' pitches for travellers, the London boroughs at least 15 'at a time' and the shire counties simply 'adequate accommodation'. The Act, however, omitted to set a time limit. The result is that, seven years after the Act came fully into operation, many areas of Britain still provide no sites. In London, Islington, for example, has a sizeable itinerant population. It also has no pitches – either temporary or permanent – and has no plans for any. The Act also failed to provide adequate sanctions against recalcitrant authorities. Admittedly, Section 9 allows a minister to use a '*mandamus* action' in the courts to force a council to do its duty, but successive governments haven't bothered. In theory it seems anyone can bring such an action. Indeed, a number of travellers tried but failed. The reason the courts gave was that a *mandamus* action was already available to the minister.

Some authorities, of course, have carried out their responsibilities well: Hertfordshire and the London Borough of Lewisham for example. Essex County Council drew up a list of 53 possible sites for Colchester. Every suggestion aroused local hostility. Indeed at the planning inquiry, fears were expressed that gypsies on one proposed site might steal patients from a local mental hospital. Colchester, inevitably enough, referred the whole matter back to Essex County Council, and the gypsies still have nothing.

However, where decisions have been made they have often been misguided. An assumption behind the 1968 Act was that travellers wanted to settle down. Hampshire, for example, experimented with prefabricated houses, but without much success. The theory presupposed that gypsies wanted to give up their nomadic lifestyle, whereas the vast majority, according to recent research, do in fact want to stay on the road. Some even aver that they feel claustrophobic in houses. As Roy Wells, a traveller from South London, explained: 'The whole idea of the Government and the rest is to take our freedom away. If we settled we'd have to fill in forms and so on. Travelling would be at an end.' As it was, his flash trailer contained a china horse and varda as the only reminder of tradition.

The number of sites provided for by the Act was based on a census carried out in 1965. No scope for review was given and so now many areas have more travellers than they're legally obliged to care for. Suffolk County Council plans to build 30 pitches, though a survey carried out by them pointed to some 120 families in the county. Oldham, to take a slightly different case, established a relatively luxurious site, were able to handpick suitable gypsies, and then, their statutory obligations met, applied for and were granted designation under the Act. Designation was intended as a carrot to encourage authorities to provide sites. In effect, though, it establishes a legal 'no-go area' for gypsies: those not lucky enough to secure a pitch have to leave or face prosecution.

That is a lot shared by thousands of other families. A government circular urging councils not to evict gypsies who have nowhere else to go seems to have gone relatively unheeded. A family who camped on a traditional stopping place on an industrial estate in Ipswich have been evicted three times. Meanwhile the authorities saw fit to offer the land rent free to a local farmer. Another family living on a lay-by near Colchester were evicted by a private security firm at great cost to the local council. A landowner allowed them to camp in a field nearby, though he is now being prosecuted for failing to have a site licence.

In practice then, many local authorities evade their responsibilities by simply moving families on. Their legal armoury is strong. The Highways Act, for instance, prohibits camping on the highway by any person 'being a gypsy'. For a traveller to argue that he trespassed because no sites were provided cannot be defended in the courts. Legal aid is therefore generally withheld. Local bye-laws can also be used to persuade itinerants to move on, as well as more informal pressures. Stockport, though providing one temporary site, for a long time had a gypsy problem because there weren't enough pitches to go round. Instead of providing more, they drew up a code of practice for the eviction of itinerants. Among its provisions: notices to quit should be served as soon as possible after the itinerants arrive; eviction should be timed for 7 a.m. (a time generally suitable for police attendance). Since the code was introduced nearly two years ago, Stockport have claimed that their gypsy problem has ended. It's possible the two are linked.

The failure of the Act to tackle the problem of the provision of sites has met with strong, if limited, action from the gypsies themselves. It took three years to set up a permanent site in Wandsworth, and that was with a sympathetic council. There was much local opposition, from those who complained about barking dogs, to those who, seeking to prove a point, dumped bags of rubbish at the entrance to the site in the early morning. In the end, the site cost about £160,000 and has stables, a community centre, an education play-bus and facilities for work. Such successes help the campaign in other parts of the country. Pressure is being exerted at the moment to make Kent and Surrey fulfil their obligations: first letters and chats with sympathetic councillors, and then if that fails, a build-up of the gypsy population until the authority can no longer cope with evictions.

Such action, however, takes time to yield results, and not all travellers are so well organised. As well as the Cripps Report, intended as a consultative document, the Department of the Environment are publishing a new circular on 25 March. But while they're keen to persuade local authorities to provide sites, exhortation, it seems, is not enough. The need for a network of temporary sites throughout the country is critical. Unless something is done – and there's no time for legislation this session – gypsies will continue to be harassed and the rest of the community will continue to feel their prejudices reinforced.

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NOT JUST A GAY NOVEL

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London Diary

☐ Jim Callaghan hasn't yet been Prime Minister for a year but the birthday tributes have already started flooding in. There was a particularly fulsome one in the *Sunday Mirror* last weekend – which, I'm sure, did the PM's Concorde-lag no harm at all. It made at least one valid point: that Callaghan has already succeeded in imprinting his own distinctive style on No 10. Guile is out and bluffness is in – to the point where Jim doesn't even bother with the elaborate rehearsals that his predecessor went in for before answering Questions in the Commons. Instead he cheerfully blurts out the first thing that comes into his head. In the House of Commons it's a technique that has, with one or two exceptions, worked well enough; but it went down, or so I'm told, something less than a treat at the recent joint meeting of the cabinet and the NEC. There the PM caused some shock and dismay by bluntly outlining the terms on which he was prepared to *accept* the Left's support in sustaining *his* Government. Somebody promptly accused him of wanting to practise 'Grand Canyon politics'. But our Jim is not, it turns out, a man in whom there is no guile after all. For the reply – benevolent, understanding, even compassionate – was 'Ah, Barbara, that would be bound to be your view, wouldn't it?'

☐ One thing Callaghan has already been given credit for is bringing the younger Labour talent into the cabinet. Bill Rodgers, Roy Hattersley, Edmund Dell and now David Owen all owe their places at the cabinet table to the present PM rather than his predecessor. A credit mark, then, for Jim? Well, yes – except that I happened to come across the other day a statement of Dick Crossman's that had its own especial ring of inconvenient truth. Looking back on his own period as a cabinet minister, Dick gave this dissenting view of the traditional cabinet game of musical chairs:

> Each change of minister strengthens the Department he leaves so that the civil servants know that they have eight months at least before his successor knows enough to be effective. A minister is only a danger to his Department at the end of his second year. Take him away before then and the civil service heaves a sigh of relief.

So how many cabinet jobs have Wilson and Callaghan between them managed to change around since Labour came back to office just three years ago? By my count only four cabinet ministers – the Lord Chancellor, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chancellor of the Duchy and the Secretary of State for Wales – remain in the posts they held originally. All other cabinet positions have been changed at least once, if not twice – leaving the present cabinet of 24 with no less than 17 members who have been in their current jobs for less than a year. Which, no doubt, is just the way the civil service likes it to be.

☐ Of course continuity at the top is not everything but it can still count for a lot (not least in the relations between ministers and mandarins). Take as an example the appointment announced last week of Robert Armstrong, formerly Ted Heath's and, briefly, Harold Wilson's principal private secretary at No 10, to be the new permanent under-secretary at the Home Office. Mr Armstrong – whom even Ted Heath regarded as 'no mean musician' – is 49, though he will be 50 before he takes up his new job in July; but that is still young for a permanent secretary and unless (which, I suppose, is possible) he goes on to even higher things he will be running the Home Office until 1987. How many ministers could he expect to see off in that time? Your guess is as good as mine, but if we were to take the last ten years as a test-case he would have been through at least half a dozen. At the end of such a decade there could hardly be much question as to whose voice was carrying the real authority in the Department. Which, again, since the Home Office is a particularly tricky ministry, is presumably just the way the civil service plans these things ahead.

☐ Why, though, should I assume that there is any such thing as a collective civil service mind and what right have I, or anyone else, to suspect it of being set in a conservative mould? Anyone tempted to put forward that kind of query should perhaps look first at a new book out this week *Social Class Differences in Britain* by Ivan Reid (Open Books £2.95). Its author himself modestly concedes that his is essentially a work of compilation and does not claim that he has unearthed much new; but he has certainly done a formidable job in drawing a relief map of modern Britain complete with class contours. The chapter I found most revealing (and dispiriting) was that on education – for there Ivan Reid has done much the same thing that R. H. Tawney did in *Equality* (first published in 1931), right down to providing the same kind of tables. And how do you think the results, so far as the civil service is concerned, compare? If 72 per cent of top civil servants were public school educated in 1927 (Tawney's reference point), 62 per cent remained so in 1970 (Reid's reference year). Not much egalitarian progress there.

☐ All of us who are used to the ways of Sir William Ryland's Post Office should have realised that their Sunday collection was dead from the moment they said last May that they would withdraw it for a year on a trial basis. So utterly indifferent have the Post Office become to public displeasure that they haven't even gone through the form of giving it the year's trial. The full chop was announced last week, although the Post Office as a whole is making a big profit and even the letter services are profitable. Of course, Lord Peddie's toothless watchdog the Post Office Users' National Council has provided armfuls of evidence that people don't like it going. People in rural areas especially who need to get letters to town by Monday morning are badly affected. We have actually noticed that letters posted in London on Saturday often don't get from one side of the city to the other until the following Tuesday. But on the slogan 'pay more, get less' the Post Office is ruthlessly discriminating between aspects of its responsibilities it finds profitable and those it doesn't. By the way, a Post Office press officer says 'we really don't like delivering parcels to rural areas'. You with country cousins, post early for Christmas.

☐ Lawyers are now satisfied that no new legal horror has been unleashed on the press by the award of copyright damages to Clive Jenkins against Paul Foot and the *Socialist Worker*. The copyright claim was inextricably linked with the libel action, and the real question is how any jury could have thought that readers would take seriously the comic suggestion that Clive was offering guided tours of Spanish prisons. After five and a half hours, the jury was divided six to six, and only reached a verdict after 'guidance' from Mr Justice Melford Stevenson. Melford is now the senior (i.e. oldest) Puisne Judge, which apparently entitles him to try the cases of his choice. It has been suggested that he hogs those cases which provide an opportunity to heap scorn on left-wingers. It is time the Lord Chancellor realised that these trials call especially for an even-tempered approach, and not for the reactionary sarcasm which Melford has matured over the past 74 years.

☐ The Institute of Directors has sent me a full-page handout on how they intend to defeat 'ridiculous and burdensome' bureaucracy. The plan is for firms to seek out the 'most ludicrous' examples of 'government meddling', for a 'Bumf of the Month' contest. Entries, it says, will be judged by a panel of MPs and top industrialists. Reassuring to know that even at the top they can, when it comes to it, spare an hour or two for 'productive work'.

Crucifer

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ At a coffee morning I attended recently, everybody felt strongly that capital punishment should be brought back. Why cannot we have a national vote, especially after *Panorama*'s programme on our overcrowded prisons? Recent crimes have made everybody feel sick at heart for the poor people involved and their families. Cannot we think of some solution? – Letter in *Daily Mail* (James Morgan)

☐ Extra Terrestrials. Researcher wants to meet people from other planets or space – time continuums. Please write with details. Confidentiality guaranteed. – Classified ad in the *Guardian* (Dr B. Kilby)

☐ He sees himself as the gentleman burglar, choosing his victims from the society pages of the *Tatler*; learning the layout of their homes from the sumptuous property adverts in glossy magazines; tracking prospective victims from the gossip columns. 'The *Tatler* might as well be known as the *Burglars' Gazette* – you can buy it in prison, and a lot do.' – *Brighton Evening Argus* (H. Reynold)

☐ Exams. Learn the principles of success in studying and passing exams. One day course. – Advertisement in *Wirral Globe* (H. A. Bonington)

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University Forum

Edmund Ions*

York Under Siege

'If they vote for direct action,' I told the seminar, a hard-working, third-year lot, 'keep two things in mind. First, try to keep a sense of humour. There will be moments of high comedy you will want to remember in future years when the issues have been forgotten. Second, keep a sense of proportion. At the height of the siege, one of the acting commissars will announce the Fourth – or is it the Fifth – International, and predict that by dawn, the Marxist cock will crow over the putrescent corpse of obsolete capitalism. This will not, in fact, occur. All of us will be here next term, devilling away at some tedious seminar topic, and this time next year, a reasonable proportion of you will be wearing suits and commuting with black plastic brief-cases to some large enterprise. Good luck, and may God be with you.'

This advice was necessary, because they were approaching finals, and had not been through an occupation before, whereas we academics are now veterans of four or five. This year's 'issue' was God's gift, with all the right ingredients. Higher fees, especially for overseas students, means: Discrimination, Racism, Capitalism, and Bureaucratic Corporatism in the shape of the DES, UGC, CVCP, and the local Admin. To your tents, Oh Israel.

Still, York was rather slow off the mark. The groundswell and the opening moves must be skimped here, to get to the action. It involved lots of pieces of paper flowing between the student union executive and the general academic board (York's Senate) with complex tables and projections. When the parties deadlocked over their inability to apportion a budget which has not so far been vouchsafed to the university by the UGC, in these hand-to-mouth days, things began to move. The first broadsides appeared: 'Only recourse. Last resort. Cynical Academics. Discrimination, Racism, etc . . .' We began with what was called a 'work-in' at the main library. This is a very civilised affair, and clearly, some useful work had been put in by the *Softly, Softly* cadres of the far Left, in their escalation and exploitation manuals. A 'work-in' is a newcomer to the lexicon, with pleasing vibrations, despite the doctrinal difficulties of the antonym – perhaps a 'play-in' or a 'work-out'.

For the untutored, however, a 'work-in' is a quiet affair, with the innocent and the devout bent over their books. Soon after dawn, they cleaned up, left everything shipshape, and took their leave. Unhappily, the Government had not reversed its policy in the watches of the night. Either Mr Callaghan had not been informed of the York work-in or, if informed, he was proving extremely inflexible. Thus to sterner measures. The supreme clash with authority could no longer be averted.

At York, administration is housed in Heslington Hall, a fairly well-proportioned Elizabethan mansion, rebuilt in the 19th century, standing apart, with lawns front and rear, and many an exit and entrance. A prize and also a symbol, with a pleasing profile by moonlight, it contains only one duty porter by night. It was there for the taking. First, of course, the democratic procedures. The mass meeting, with a high proportion of first-year students, resident on campus, idealistic, even about student politics, and easy fodder for the professionals. They came, they listened, they could see that the issue was perfectly simple – a racist government in league with fascist academics, against the wretched of the earth. They occupied.

The first stroke of humour came early. One of my third-year students tried to stay an impressionable first-year student. 'No,' she said firmly, 'I'm going in. I've never *been* in an occupation before.' The citadel stormed, academics, administrators and students settled down to the fairly civilised trench warware which then followed. The chief weapons are leaflets, in all colours, shapes and sizes. At certain stages, staid and emollient communications came to the dining-hall tables from the vice-chancellor, keeping very close to the facts, showing sympathy and concern, but not yielding the essential points. The student literature is much more exotic, as different groups get in on the act, from Gay Lib. to Macrobiotic (or is it bionic now?) One has a professional interest, needless to say, in the political groups, each one claiming chief credit for raising the people's consciousness. The International Socialists came out daily on pale green A4. One of them before me now reads: 'We have slowly, and gradually built up a campaign. Administration vacillated, stalled and tried to dupe us. [They] plotted, planned, and tried to split us. To capitulate now will not only kill any possibility of winning non-implementation [of fees increases] it will not only lead to more and more blatant racism . . .' etc. etc.

The Liberals, on pale yellow, were more genial, even poetic. One broadside is taken up mainly with a rather long poem, if that is the word. At least it rhymes, and internal evidence suggests a romantic, female disposition:

> It's Friday now and in Heslington Hall
> We Students rally to the call;
> But now today there comes the crunch:
> Will we be there for Sunday lunch?

The doggerel suggests a contribution from the English Department – since the whole thing is subscribed 'Without thanks to W. Wordsworth Esq.', but if that is the provenance, I must take up mixed metaphors with my colleagues there.

One knew, in advance, that the occupation would last not less than four days, and probably not more than ten. Less than four days spells defeat, and the novelty has not worn off. As for the ten days, it depends on where the weekend falls. A weekend is a long time in occupation politics. The faithful on the hard floors are aware that parties are still going on around campus, that the two pubs in Heslington village are crowded and full of merriment, that the world is not watching breathlessly. One weekend may be necessary for the cause. Two is asking a bit much. The York siege ended peacefully, and without court order, by the students voting to come out after seven days. The time was early morning, last Friday.

The leaflets were much more daring this time, their tone getting shrill as the week developed. Even the graduates' association could not avoid a touch of spleen. A long, dense document came out, replete with figures and percentages, but with a hiccup in the middle where passion showed through the bland figures: 'It is often argued that universities should be a place of rational debate . . . This is a noble idea, but as anyone who has been involved in them for any length of time knows, the back-stabbing and double-dealing that goes on would make a civil servant cringe.' This struck me as rather hard on civil servants. Language is stretched in various ways, needless to say, and the student newspaper filled its columns with animated versions in 'Insight' style, freshly minted by war correspondents returning from the battlefront. Of the assistant registrar's attempt to keep out the mob on the first night, one intrepid reporter wrote: 'His refusal to open the doors to the students constituted provocation, an attempt to force the students into violence.' One has known for some time that this particular colleague is rather more interested in his vegetable garden than in trench warfare.

But after the initial entry, the whole thing was very peaceful. By a very orderly agreement, honoured on all sides, visitors were allowed, and the lofty, interior hall, with its ascending staircase, became something of an art gallery. The portrait of Lord James, first vice-chancellor, was carefully covered by a sellotaped quotation from Gramsci. Gurus come and go, and of course Antonio Gramsci is the Guru Regnant. Even the student newspaper devoted its back cover to a full quotation in bold calligraphy. Reading it, one begins to understand why some of the students taught by a colleague (who has the Gramsci bug) tend to look rather dazed as the course develops. Herewith, and I jest not:

> Day by day a part of our maximum demands is achieved; this part cannot be determined *a priori*, since history is not a mathematical calculation. The part that is achieved by the dialectical outcome of the continuous interplay between social activities and maximum goals. Only if these maximum goals are pursued intransigently can the dialectic be history and not puerile contingency, a solid achievement and not a mistake that has to be undone and corrected. – Antonio Gramsci (1918).

The good thing about universities is that they keep young people off the streets.

*Edmund Ions is Reader in Politics at the University of York.

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Spill The Beans

Those for whom death is no longer a very distant landmark (and I can assure you that, even nearing 67, one becomes a pinch thoughtful from time to time) must take care not to remove with them, when their time comes, any valuable piece of information that they could, so easily and profitably, have offloaded onto friends earlier on, causing both gratitude and raised eyebrows. And not only valuable information either. What's wrong with amusing or entertaining or startling items of information? My advice is to scrutinise memory's tablets forthwith for interesting scraps and shed them now while there is time.

My life seems to have been full of people who have withheld from me fascinating facts. It was years, far too many years, before Noel Annan thought to tell me that, as a boy at Stowe, he had become, very rightly and understandably, badly smitten with the exotic charms of a well known film actress from the inscrutable east and called Anna May Wong. He had written a fan letter to her from school (a frivolous sort of activity that would have been much frowned on at Oundle, our record on the rugger field, so incontestably superior to that of Stowe, proving the soundness of our views in this, and other, matters) and he had in due course received by way of reply a happy snap of the celluloid enchantress. And what is more she had kindly signed it 'Orientally Yours, A. M. Wong'. This happening was just a tiny fragment of life's jig-saw, I know, but I resented the wasted decades when I could have been enjoying this little human tit-bit of news.

Then there was a schoolboy called Midgley to whom I taught French in 1933 and who waited till 1958, if you please, by which time he was a father twice over, to inform me that his mother had gone down in the *Titanic*, his very presence there before me indicating that she had successfully come bobbing up again and had subsequently married. To have known this in 1933 would have considerably enlivened our oral French lessons: '*Que fit le grand bateau? Il plongea jusqu'au fond de l'océan. Que fit la mère de Midgley? Elle nagea courageusement.*' Apart from anything else, the exercise in the use of verbs ending in *-ger* would have been useful.

And now here we are, well into 1977, before a friend of nearly 30 years' standing and now doing splendidly in Independent Television, decides to write and tell me, doubtless sparked off by my passing reference a week or so ago to Dr Crippen, that his father, an Irish high-church parson, lived in 1909-1910 actually next door to what he describes as 'that respectable medical man' in Hilldrop Crescent, N7, and, what is more, 'liked him very much'. This was of course at the very time when Crippen was planning his unusual course of action over the future of his wife. I think I referred to the good doctor as 'shoddy and inefficient', a description which the facts still seem to bear out, but my friend is clearly anxious to emphasise the then social acceptability of that now somewhat run-down neighbourhood and to demonstrate that somebody at least thought well of the little man. But then clergymen *have* to like people. It's in their contract.

To be, admittedly at third hand but by such a strange chance, once again in touch, more or less, with Crippen, gives one an eerie sensation, although the past is sometimes nearer than we think. We are, after all, only 15 coronations (followed by some shortish reigns) from Elizabeth I, and about 70 generations from Christ. Not very much really. The Twenties and Thirties seem remote in the extreme but in actual fact they are not and, in addition to their other bizarre features, they were above all jammed with sensational murders. The South Coast was then a perilous place for lonely spinsters with nest-eggs. Handsome male rotters picked them out and then picked them up and then picked them off like sitting partridges. What further surprises of a Crippen nature are my friends going to spring on me? Am I going to find that the Bultitudes took a holiday bungalow on the Crumbles at Eastbourne in the very same week in 1924 that Miss Emily Beilby Kaye, with £700 tucked away, fixed up a Crumbles *nid d'amour* with a fiend in attractive human shape called Patrick Mahon? She had, it is true, made most of the running and therefore had only herself to blame, a fact which perhaps provided some morbid consolation when her paramour briskly set about her with an axe. Am I now to discover that Mrs Bultitude, running up a few drop scones next door, heard Miss Kaye's screams but 'didn't like to say anything'?

It seems to me curious that proximity to the sea should so often have caused murderous intent and with it an inclination to parcel the victims up, either whole or in part, and then deposit them in the left luggage departments of railway stations. Mahon recklessly darted up to London with a full Gladstone bag, left it at Waterloo, where, in the exceptionally clement weather, it soon announced its presence, and, madly calling for it a few weeks later (why?), was instantly arrested. Exactly ten years later, a Brighton left luggage attendant became aware of a sizeable canvas suitcase, subsequently found to be containing a female torso, while on the same day among the King's Cross left luggage there turned up a couple of feminine legs. A month or so later, again in Brighton, the police found a large black trunk with, this time, treasure trove in the shape of an entire identifiable corpse in it. And meanwhile up in Scotland a Dr Ruxton had neatly parcelled up various component parts of Mrs Ruxton but, there being unfortunately no railway station conveniently close and with a left luggage section, had had to make other arrangements.

It was almost as if the popular seaside resorts vied with each other. Bournemouth, not to be outshone, produced a murderous chauffeur who, by means of bogus advertisements, enticed superior lady cooks down from London and then, after what cannot have been very satisfactory amorous activities, dispatched them to heaven in a muddy field. Then it was Yarmouth's turn (a woman strangled with a bootlace on the beach), while Charing Cross Station cloakroom provided yet another whiffy black trunk with attendant corpse. Shortly after, the Blackpool sandhills produced a dead body (female, as usual) and the balmy air of Babbacombe brought with it a murdered housewife, done in by a male servant. And where do you suppose that George Joseph (Brides in the Bath) Smith staged those unfortunate accidents? Why, at Weymouth, Herne Bay and Blackpool.

Between 1900 and 1929, 651 men were convicted of murder and were sentenced to death. Of their victims, 536 were adult women, a fact which in those days was considered extremely shocking but would seem less so in this era of women's lib. They are now, presumably, wishful to take murder on the chin along with the male rest of us.

RAYMOND LISTER

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Letters to the Editor

Labour and Europe

Sir, What a spectacle! The Government of a party which is supposed to stand for change and progress, for the future, is split over elections to the European Parliament. Michael Foot and Tony Benn, though great radicals and internationalists, are opposed to the unification of Western Europe and treat the continent like two xenophobic jingoes. Their attitude is just beyond my understanding and my contempt for them is boundless. If this is how a supposedly progressive party behaves, I want none of it. Much Mr Foot and Mr Benn care about one opinion of one voter, and that makes me wish even more that they would feel my contempt. I am already alienated from the political system of this country. I'm a voter with nowhere to go. And much Foot and Benn care. How can I vote for a progressive party which isn't progressive, and an internationalist party which is not internationalist but totally xenophobic? A litmus test of internationalism – and Benn and Foot fail it resoundingly.

Can anybody explain to me why so many MPs of a supposedly internationalist party hate the Continent so much, hate the EEC so much, hate the idea of a European electorate voting for a European Parliament? I just cannot understand it and I won't be voting Labour at the next election.

CHRISTOPHER J. K. TALLACK
19a Porchester Terrace
London W2

Sir, Spare us the windy rhetoric of Mr Whitehead's perorations (NS 4 March). 'To continue to deny the people of Britain their chance directly to criticise and reform the practices of Brussels, when all Europe moves that way, would be an absurd act of folly.' Directly? How big did you say the constituencies would have to be? All Europe? Whatever happened to Athens, Geneva, Stockholm and Warsaw?

'In a party which carries the banner for all those who have used representative institutions – however imperfect they were – to constrain the kings and princes of yesterday or the cartels and multinationals of the moment it would be unforgiveable.' Stronger on alliteration than socialist sense. What evidence is there that the EEC could 'constrain the cartels' if it ever had the will to?

As disillusionment with the Common Market spreads among those who were conned into voting 'Yes', it is necessary and entirely proper to indulge in deliberate delaying tactics, but this should be the prelude to a positive policy, not merely of 'safeguards', but of independence. If we cannot by ourselves dismember the monstrosity, let us at least break away from it.

No answer to our problems, it is true, but at least the recognition that bigness is the wrongest of all possible answers.

H. B. HALL
16 Manor Drive
Upton
Wirral, Merseyside

Sir, Phillip Whitehead is basically a sensible chap and one of the considerable band of Labour MPs one would like to see in a new party of the Left, but he really gives the game away when he admits (NS 4 March) he is against electoral reform because it would be a 'piece of no good for Labour'.

The advocates of electoral reform have long held it to be self-evident that the only arguments against proportional representation are purely selfish ones: the two parties which have dominated Westminster politics for the last 50 years will fight with all their might to retain their ill-gotten gains. They're willing to wager in our electoral general lottery and accept defeat from time to time because when they win, however dubiously, they know they can then introduce the most outrageous measures, and have them enacted, on a basis of the support of as small a minority of the electorate as 29 per cent.

Phillip Whitehead knows this as well as anyone, but at least he is honest enough to own up that his opposition is based solely on the harm he believes the introduction of PR would cause to a Labour Party increasingly more out of touch with his own and most Labour voters' brand of politics. It's not harm to the country that concerns him, mind you, only to the Labour Party: come now, would it be harmful to the millions of Labour voters south of the Thames to have a few MPs of their own persuasion for once? He is even prepared to contemplate a Labour rump of five out of 81 European MPs if only it means that the awful danger of all parties being fairly represented in the House of Commons be averted for a little longer.

As the arguments against PR, for Strasbourg and Westminster, get more and more convoluted, the Government has a splendid opportunity to combine self-interest with fairness for all by introducing PR at least for direct elections to the European Parliament. Will we get a lead from Mr Whitehead and the Manifesto Group, or will they pretend they don't agree?

ZIGGI KRONBERGS
12 Hauteville Court Gardens
London W4

Areopagitica - Vorster Style

Sir, Of course I know that we sell a lot of books to South Africa. It would be surprising were this not so, since South Africa has a large English-speaking population and virtually no local English-language book-publishing industry. The single example of a Cape Town agent who handles 300 titles a year (of which *only* eight are banned!) is not necessarily typical, and although a university may even import a scientific work on communism (provided it is not intended to promote communism), can the same university import *Playboy* magazine?

I can make out a much better case for South Africa myself, and if this is the best that Elizabeth Muir (Letters 4 March) can come up with nearly two months after my letter appeared, I must conclude either that she does not know the facts or that she is pulling wool over our eyes. Let's get the facts right, she says, implying that my facts were wrong. I wish they were. The truth is that a very large number of publications is banned every year, covering the whole literary spectrum. The rot is spreading, some Afrikaans books have at last attracted the attention of the censor, creating a situation where manuscripts are piling up. Book publishers are afraid to take the financial risk of publishing them and then having them banned. If I am wrong, I stand to be corrected, but not by the sort of evidence that Elizabeth Muir adduces.

JEFFREY SIMMONS
W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd
44 Hill Street
London W1

Crosland and Gaitskell

Sir, I am very sorry that in her letter to you (NS 11 March) Lady Gaitskell has misinterpreted my letter, published in the previous issue. I have no illusions about the well-known fact that Crosland and Gaitskell, to quote Lady Gaitskell, 'shared the same political philosophy and were the closest friends'. My original letter was written to point out the mistake of dismissing Crosland as 'just another Gaitskellite' when (a) the word 'Gaitskellite' is now a near-meaningless term misappropriated by quasi-Liberals within the Labour movement; and (b) anyway, even if Crosland was a Gaitskellite in the sense that he shared the same basic philosophy, he had moved away from the position he occupied in 1963 to develop a distinctive 'Croslandite' philosophy of his own, closely related to Gaitskell's, but different in many ways (among these being the obvious facts that Crosland saw the experiences of the Labour Government in the 1960s and 1970s and learned from them, while Gaitskell died too soon).

Again, unlike Gaitskell, Crosland wrote three considerable books of political philosophy which crystallised his ideas. Indeed, to put it plainly, it is not possible, surely, to talk of a 'Gaitskellite' approach to politics in any but vague terms, since Gaitskell did not crystallise his ideas in the same way: the very fact that the 'moderates' and Jenkinsites I was actually attacking have misappropriated the word and have been deeply offended by the failure of Crosland to join them, seems to indicate the vagueness of the concept. However, I certainly meant no offence either to Lady Gaitskell or to her husband's memory, and I hope that she will understand my quite sincere belief that, though Crosland *was* a Gaitskellite, he was a Croslandite too, which is something more.

PATRICK HEENAN
1 Saint Radigund's Street
Canterbury
Kent

Assessing Helsinki

Sir, There has, it seems to us, been very little public assessment in this country of the results which have followed the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, 1975. These results are due for review in a new conference in Belgrade, beginning in June.

It is obvious that progress under the provisions of the Helsinki Act is bound to be gradual, but since it was signed by the heads of the participating governments, and is the most comprehensive document so far covering East-West relations, it provides an increasingly important framework against which the actions of the signatories must be judged.

We have therefore decided to set up a Study Group, of which I am the chairman, and whose members are: Dr Christoph Bertram; Lord Caccia; Sir Michael Carver; Sir Frederick Catherwood; Lady Elliot of Harwood; Professor James Fawcett; Sir John Foster; Lord Harlech; Dr Rosalyn Higgins; Mr Keith Kyle; Mr Yehudi Menuhin; Mr Richard Newby; Miss Hella Pick; Dr A. E. Sloman; Mr Ian Smart; Lord Soper; Mr Jeremy Thorpe MP; Mr Ben Whitaker; Lord Wilberforce and Professor J. Ziman. Our aim is to make an objective assessment of what has been achieved by Britain, as well as by all the other signatories, within the terms of the various sections.

We are aware that in order to ensure the objectivity and the value of our work we shall require as much information as possible from the many groups and individuals, in all the signatory countries, who are closely concerned with aspects of the Final Act, and we hope that such collaboration will be forthcoming. We intend to prepare an Interim Report by the beginning of June and a Final Report to coincide with the plenary session of the Belgrade Conference in September.

Since there is therefore considerable urgency in the carrying out of our task we would ask that such collaboration should take the form

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of written evidence which can then be submitted to our members.

GEORGE THOMSON
Chairman

The David Davies Memorial
Institute of International Studies
Thorney House
34 Smith Square
London SW1

What Must We Do?

Sir, In most extended forms of verbal communication – books, pamphlets, articles, lectures, speeches – it's pretty customary to introduce the subject with some general remarks, then go into specifics for the great bulk of the thing, and then sign off with some general conclusions. It's entirely clear from James Fenton's page of drivel on the subject of the Manifesto Group's pamphlet *What We Must Do* (NS 11 March) that he had read only the opening and closing generalisations and none of the specifics in between. I don't suppose he was interested: not everyone wants to be bothered with facts and figures and serious arguments. But some NS readers are very interested indeed, and looked to your paper for an intellectually serious consideration of the many concrete proposals contained in *What We Must Do*. Any chance of your getting round to it in the next few weeks?

BRYAN MAGEE

House of Commons

Prisoners' Privacy

Sir, Writing about the *Panorama* inquiry into prison conditions, Ian Hamilton (NS 4 March) becomes both superficial and vindictive – unusual for his weekly TV piece which I normally enjoy – when describing the work of the prison censors. He describes 'the prison letter-censoring operatives' as 'smug and prurient' and says the particular censor interviewed 'certainly enjoyed his nasty job'. (That only one censor was interviewed does not prevent Ian Hamilton describing a general smugness and prurience).

Yes, it is a nasty job, and I suppose one could offer the reductionist argument, logically very dubious, which says that only the smug and prurient are attracted to it: which is like saying that bus conductors only do their job because they like running upstairs. But the censor interviewed gave no evidence at all of 'enjoying' his job in the drooling, gloating way Hamilton implies. He was a little pompous and very awkward in trying to justify reading prisoners' letters in cases where it was impossible to do so. I saw no sign of prurience at all.

There *is* an argument for reading prisoners' mail, which one has to force oneself to put against one's natural and immediate disgust for the whole idea. That is, doing so may prevent other crimes being committed. I do not know whether the practice of censorship and the resentment it arouses among prisoners is worth it, in terms of crimes prevented – I would like to see some kind of evidence, both ways. But I do not like to see Ian Hamilton getting enjoyment from making a very small man wriggle when to do so means ignoring more complex, but dull, questions. Ian Hamilton would be one of the first to attack the cheap, simplistic, confrontations which we are often told is the stuff of 'good television'. Neither is it good journalism.

DON SALTER

43 Severn Stoke
Nr Worcester

The Dockers' March

Sir, Mr Niak (Letters 11 March) is completely wrong in talking of '40,000 dockers being given the boot as a result of the Container Revolution'. Anyone who knows anything about the National Dock Labour Board Scheme, and its extension in London through the Aldington/Jones report, will recognise the falsity of Mr Niak's statement.

The facts are that the only way that registered employees can have their services terminated is through natural wastage or voluntary severance. Indeed London port employers, principally the Port of London Authority, are carrying the burden of the cost of surplus labour. The PLA's figures show that the cost of their excess manpower in 1975 was approximately £7.8m. The PLA also has the responsibility of accepting a large proportion of reallocated labour from other employers in the Port who have gone out of business or who have reduced their manpower strength for other reasons.

The information given above is taken from the second report (October 1976) of the Joint Port Trade Development Committee, which comprises representatives of all interests in the Port, including trade unions. Very conscious of the heavy cost of surplus manpower which means enhanced port charges, the committee has recommended that the Government should assume responsibility for some of the costs of excess labour within the Port of London.

G. M. KINSEY

56 Oakwood Crescent
Greenford
Middlesex

Sir, Mr Niak does not answer any of John Davies's points (Letters 25 February). First, he denies that the dockers demonstrated in support of Enoch Powell and, later on, he claims they acted as they did because they felt threatened. That has always been the kind of excuse for any kind of discrimination, and brutality too, at times. Considering average dockers' earnings, it is doubtful whether the victims of the capitalist economy would feel much in common with the dockers.

Anyway, the dockers did march in support of Enoch Powell and, when they were rebuked for it by Ian Mikardo at Westminster, they called him racialist names, after which he called them fascists. Who felt threatened then?

G. W. WENDON

36 Fitzjohn's Avenue
London NW3

Rhodesia's Compulsory Education

Sir, Your correspondent Chris Mullin argues in 'Rhodesia and the British Press' (NS 25 February) that, given the brutal nature of the regime, white Rhodesians might well have perpetrated the atrocities of which they accuse the guerrillas. I do not profess personal knowledge concerning the various massacres discussed by Mullin. But I do have before me a report in which Bishop Abel Muzorewa's wing of the Rhodesian African National Council condemns the 'brutal murder' of 15 mission school pupils who reportedly refused to fight for rival ZAPU forces.

I also have on my desk a book authored by Ndabaningi Sithole, a nationalist of unquestioned credentials, entitled *Obed Muteso The Mudzimu Christian Nationalist* by N. Sithole (OUP, 1976), published with a preface by Kenneth Kaunda, who regards the book as evidence for 'the brutality of the settler security machine'. On p. 141, the author describes the hardships of nationalist detainees interned in a Rhodesian government camp:

> As soon as the people had spread themselves they settled down to studies. Advocate Edson Sithole LL.D, who was serving a 12-month restriction order was doing his Master of Laws degree which he eventually passed. Mr Robert Mugabe, B.A., B.Ed.(S.A.) and B.Sc.(London) was doing his LLB. also by correspondence. Mr Edson Zvogbo B.A. (S.A.), and B.A. (Tufts) was also doing LL.B. and most restrictees were doing various courses from Standard Four Level to the level of GCE.

Which other African countries permits political detainees, at a time of bloody strife, to take correspondence courses? Burundi? Uganda? Equatorial Guinea? Angola? I suggest that, for all its failings, Rhodesia is run with a greater degree of efficiency and humanity than the bulk of independent Africa. Instead of asking the settlers to re-examine their values, you might perhaps re-examine your own.

L. H. GANN

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Apt 32
Palo Alto, California

Discrimination at the DES

Sir, I have no weight to add to John Griffith's argument (University Forum, NS 4 March), but how's this for a little seasoning?

Professor Griffith implies that the overseas students subject to higher fees are all foreign students. Not so. The current DES definition of 'overseas' has nothing to do with nationality, but is based on residence. Later this year I shall find myself an overseas postgraduate student by virtue of having worked in a Commonwealth country for the past three years, notwithstanding that this has been as an education officer designated under a Ministry of Overseas Development overseas aid scheme.

However, I do retain my full rights as a British citizen, including the eligibility to apply to a local education authority for a grant aid – not a privilege enjoyed by my fellow (non-British) overseas students who may, perhaps, claim this as further evidence of discrimination!

J. W. DAVIES

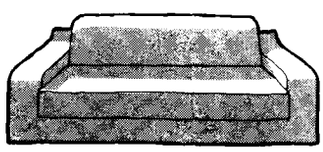
PO Box 382
Kitwe
Zambia

One Man's Protest

Sir, The article – 'One Jones, One Vote' – by Patrick Wintour in last week's edition of the NEW STATESMAN is so full of inaccuracies that I would suggest the Editor, Patrick Wintour and myself should meet with a view to agreeing a statement of corrections; otherwise distortions about the nature and character of the Transport and General Workers' Union, which I claim are contained in the article, will tend to be regarded as academic history.

I ask for this letter to be published in this week's edition of the NEW STATESMAN.

J. L. JONES
General Secretary
Transport and General Workers Union
Transport House
London SW1



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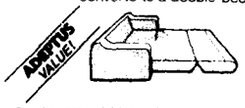

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SPRING BOOKS

John Carey

What Exactly Do You Mean?

Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews edited by George Plimpton: Fourth Series *Secker & Warburg* £6.50

The belief that writers ought to have ideas still lingers. In academic circles, particularly, there is a strong feeling that any author worth his salt will possess a philosophy, ideally one of roughly thesis-length. This seems unfair. No one considers it part of the duty of musicians or painters to provide useful tips about human nature or the meaning of the universe. Why should a poet or novelist be saddled with such concerns, simply because his artistic medium is words? In the new volume of *Paris Review Interviews* a refreshingly large number of the writers interviewed protest that they have nothing whatever of general import to say. 'We have no message at all' (Borges); 'no idea about philosophical positions and world views' (George Seferis); 'no moral aim' (Anthony Burgess). John Updike puts the point with, as usual, the maximum elegance:

> Everything is infinitely fine, and any opinion is somehow coarser than the texture of the real thing. I find it hard to have opinions . . . I think of my books not as sermons or directives in a war of ideas but as objects, with different shapes and textures and the mysteriousness of anything that exists.

Of course, if asking writers for opinions is truly futile, then so are *Paris Review Interviews*. Sensing this, perhaps, several of the authors in this batch were reluctant, at first, to cooperate, and Steinbeck managed to die before an interview could be arranged. (His contribution has been cobbled together from old letters.)

Understandably, what the writers are least keen to be asked is what their works 'mean' – as if what they actually write were so much cryptographic flummery easily bypassable by a little plain speaking. Isak Dinesen voices the general exasperation on this count: 'I intend everything as it's stated. It would be terrible if the explanation of the work were outside the work itself.' For people who teach and write about literature, on the other hand, it would be terrible if it were not. Self-explanatory artefacts would put many of them out of business. Hence, maybe, the tendency among critics (observable in Wilfred Sheed's simpering preface to this volume) to treat writers as loveable weirdies who don't appreciate the real significance of what they're about.

The writers, for their part, seem to regard the critics with disdain or apathy – 'curious sucker fish', Steinbeck calls them; and John Berryman tells a story about a girl graduate writing a thesis on his debt to Hebrew elegiac metre, a subject about which he is in fact totally ignorant. The horror of a girl squandering youth and energy on such a project seems to escape Berryman entirely. 'It's a harmless industry,' he comments; 'It gets people degrees.'

Anyone who takes the study of literature seriously is bound to find such cynicism depressing, especially, somehow, when it comes from a drink-sodden wreck like Berryman who, in common with other writers in the volume, could hardly be said to be an advertisement for the life-enhancing effects of art. Kerouac, gabbling on with the fluency of a jammed beer-tap about his contempt for 'all-that-crap craft business' and his determination to 'take no shit from nobody', is probably, from this viewpoint, the most repellent specimen on display. Under the joint influence of booze, and of some little white pills which the interviewers take along for Kerouac and themselves to munch, his interview gradually disintegrates into addled chaos. No doubt it's meant to come across as a riot of liberated fun – an expression, as Kerouac himself puts it, of 'the ecstatic tomfoolery of the age'. But why one should suppress one's instinctive disgust at such a performance isn't, to me, apparent.

Anne Sexton also strikes one as an interviewee it would have been worth going a long way round to avoid. Quite apart from the inevitable moans about having to cook and change nappies, her solemn and unswerving self-concern is soon wearying. Her discovery of her 'creative depths', her long and variegated history of mental illness, her 'courage' and 'daring' in writing about it, her relationship with Maxine Kumin ('part superego, part sister, as well as pal of my desk'), are all chronicled with remorseless garrulity. Apparently a psychiatrist once told her she had a 'leaky ego', and you can see the aptness of his diagnosis. The tone of her monologue wobbles between winsome affectation ('I not only have lived, but loved, that sometime miracle') and pseudo-male brashness, as in her advice to Maxine on the art of the novel – 'I told her "Fuck structure and grab your characters by the time balls".' Besides being muddling, that seems a desperately impoverished utterance for someone whose craft is supposed to be words. That Anne Sexton later killed herself hardly makes one happier, of course, about finding her interview so awful, or about her satisfactoriness as a human being.

It's a relief to turn from these derelicts to Borges – blind, cheerful, a model of courtesy, sanely and articulately aware of the inner violence which his (and anyone's) culture both sublimates and fosters. He meets daily, he explains, with a little group of students in his room at the Biblioteca Nacional, to translate *Beowulf* or Norse sagas. He relates the appeal these savage narratives have for him to his fascination, when he was a youth in the slums, with a particularly murderous kind of knife used in street fights. Typically it was the knife's name (*el vaivén*: the come and go) that gripped him: 'you see the flash, the sudden flash'. His passion for verbal expressiveness has taken him into corners of English literature unrummaged even by most specialists. The versatile Bishop Wilkins (1614-72) is an especial favourite. 'He created a beautiful word, a word that's a poem in itself, full of hopelessness, sadness and despair: the word *neverness* . . . I don't think it's ever been used.'

The interview which works best as entertainment is Robert Graves's, partly because he had the luck to be allocated the two most gormless interviewers, partly because he enjoys loosing, out of the blue, statements that sound both authoritative and wholly bogus – as, for instance, 'The leading atomic scientist in Australia agreed with me the other day that time does not really exist,' or 'They find now that if a snail eats another snail it gets that second snail's memory.' Reeling from conversation-stoppers of this calibre, the men from the *Paris Review* either change the subject quickly to something neutral ('How many books have you published?') or, more venturesomely, rise to the bait – 'Did you really mean that? That God had a wife?' – only to be pelted with further lumps of miscellaneous erudition.

The Auden interview also has its moments. 'I don't see how any civilised person can watch TV, far less own a set' is a judgment to be cherished (as, for that matter, is Nabokov's comment, in his interview, on 'the pretentious nonsense of Mr Pound, that total fake'). And Auden's comfy lingo ('peeve', 'dotty', 'not my cup of tea') brings him back almost as vividly as does the fissured visage in Hockney's drawing. On women he is, as usual, perceptive: 'No woman ever wrote nonsense verse. Women are realists: I think if men knew what women said to each other about them, the human race would die out.' No doubt his homosexuality helped to give him this understanding and fear. Christopher Isherwood, who also figures in the volume, observes how precious homosexuality is to a writer, since it allows him to see everything from an abnormal angle.

Auden's hopelessness about the arts is, nowadays, less abnormal: 'The arts can do nothing. The social and political history of Europe would be what it has been if Dante, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Mozart, et al., had never lived.' Even if that's true (and it's a dictum that takes its confidence from the knowledge that the matter can't be

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Michael Joseph

demonstrated either way), Shakespeare and the rest have undeniably made the social and political history easier to put up with. Besides, since Auden holds that the poet's one political duty is to set an example of the correct use of his mother tongue (because when language deteriorates, force takes over), he must believe that the arts *could* have a political effect, whether or not they have yet.

Most of the writers interviewed are old, so there is plentiful reminiscence. Conrad Aiken recalls his wild drinking bouts with Eliot, on one of which, towards the end of his life, Eliot got so paralytic that he couldn't uncross his ankles and had to be lifted into the taxi by Valerie. 'A splendid occasion,' Aiken chuckles. Less splendid, of course, in sober print. Perhaps, after all, the best story is Isherwood's about Stravinsky. They once drove out to the Sequoia forest, and Stravinsky, a tiny figure, stood for a long while gazing up at a giant Sequoia. Then, turning to Isherwood, he said: 'That's serious.' It's more than can always be said for writers, or interviews.

V. S. Pritchett

The Opportunist

Shakespeare: The Man and his Achievement
by ROBERT SPEAIGHT *Dent* £6.50

In the last year of his life Robert Speaight finished this very personal study of the relation of Shakespeare's life to his art which he had been working on for years. It is a book alive with crisp inquiry. As a writer, Speaight has the perspicacity of a man of divided gifts: he brings to his subject the flair and experience of the Shakespearean actor and producer and the insights of a critic of wide reading. He weighs the disputes and conjectures of the best Shakespearean scholars and knows how to excite conversation in the general reader. He adores the poet and, as a professional, he is especially aware of the practical dramatist. For him the plays 'constitute Shakespeare's biography', not, of course, in factual detail but in the simple sense that the writing, acting and production of his plays occupied by far the greater part of his daily life.

So it would be dangerous to regard the plays as 'self-expression': except in the *Sonnets*, what we can detect of Shakespeare's life is small and perhaps – as with Flaubert? – unimportant. Shakespeare was concerned with *other* people, not with himself, taking life and history as he found them and – 'being both a realist and a romantic' – he found them as many-sided as he was himself. He undoubtedly thought success respectable. Many-sidedness has indeed been the mark of the highest genius. It would therefore be wrong to suppose, as some have done, that the 'problem' plays and tragedies of the Jacobean period are evidence of some mysterious personal crisis or nervous breakdown in the poet's life: their proper reference is not to life but to fresh possibilities of dramatic art. The decision to write a different kind of play is an act of professional will, influenced by audience and the times and the readiness of a self-inventing mind. In this sense, Shakespeare is an opportunist whose response to the emotion recollected in tranquillity changes as he recollects it in changed times. For him tranquillity is not tranquil; it is an opportunity for metamorphosis. In maturity it is natural for a great artist to increase his intellectual difficulties.

Speaight quotes Geoffrey Grigson's remark that with Shakespeare it is 'our English fortune to share particularities with him'. Speaight's particularities are tolerance, balance and pleasant common sense – but not only the last. His Shakespeare is the poet-playwright writing under strict government censorship (as far as current politics at home and abroad were concerned) and in times of alarm and conspiracy, when the demands of consensus had to be met. His apparent orthodoxy in politics and religion and his hatred of the Puritan taint must be seen in this light: the Court was less to be feared by a hard-working playwright and poet than were the Puritan militants. The Puritans wanted to destroy his trade. (One can guess that the orthodox were much better at dealing mercifully with sin.) Yet, if the playwright can be sometimes read as a novelising moderator, judging men and women in their circumstances, the poet lives by the immoderation of his own (and their) self-imaginations. Speaight thinks of him as having two audiences in mind and indeed the genius of Shakespeare is dual. One audience was

> his professional audience of actors and public – groundlings below, more prosperous citizens in the tiers above, and perhaps Southampton himself on a stool at the side of the stage. They all had to be pleased. With the actors he would rehearse in the morning, perform in the afternoon and confabulate when the play was over.

But at night – and here we see Speaight the romantic –

> as the tallow burned low and the embers died in the hearth Shakespeare wrote for that other secret audience which was himself. Then he would let his imagination run riot and his pen keep pace with it, knowing very well that this or that might have to come out in performance, but seeing in his mind's eye an ideal stage for which he need not apologise and an ideal audience for whom an 'entirety' Hamlet would not be too long.

He certainly took no steps to get the plays published.

The best of Speaight is in his brisk and helpful commentaries on each of the plays in their turn as they were first produced;

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and in his asides on much later productions. To take a few examples – on the convention of women disguised as men – in *As You Like It* he notes that the bold use of convention can get to the rock of reality at once; also, in this play, disguise is a form of nakedness; the drama is in the rippling dialogue which dispenses with the theatrical challenge. In the long discussion on *Hamlet*, he notes that in the scene with Laertes, Hamlet can accomplish a mission in a conspiracy not of his own devising: 'for the moment it is more important to win his match against Laertes than to avenge his father's murder and his mother's shame.' So a story-teller will show a man acting freely for once outside his obsession, and therefore being more formidable and alive.

The play itself is an event rather than a masterpiece: 'it opens up the consciousness of post-Renaissance man', as indeed many others have said. But Speaight adds: 'Like his author, Hamlet is interested in everything: that is why we are interested in Hamlet.' His 'readiness is all', and it is for this reason not surprising that some have thought Shakespeare was writing for once about himself. Speaight also points out that the 12 lines on the political theory of the Divine Right (which seem more suited to *Richard II*, sound irrelevant to us and are nowadays cut) would have been sensational in 1602.

As a man of the theatre, Speaight has the good producer's quickness in seeing distinctions. Modern actors are 'quite wrong' in showing Claudius losing control at the end of the play scene: 'only Hamlet is excited – the others think'. Obviously Speaight is right. Of Shylock he says: 'pride not pathos is his *forte*. I do not see him leave the court as a broken man: the terse, monosyllabic "I am not well" indicates, surely, not collapse but self-control.' It is the line of the undefeated logician. These are small but fascinating matters. Where Speaight is at his most expansive, for the breadth of the scene has enlarged him, is his chapter on *Antony and Cleopatra*. There is no record that the play was put on in Shakespeare's time; it would have been a strain on the physical means of the Globe. The word 'world', either in the literal sense of vast Empire or metaphysical dimension, recurs again and again in the text. The whole Mediterranean, the clash of civilisations, occupy the scene which becomes a mingling of the fluid and the brazen in the golden mist of a poetry that bears fleets, embassies and battles away. Shakespeare does not describe Cleopatra; he suggests her. We know her by her effect on others. It is a play of spectators taking notes. The purpose of the poetry is not to moralise: it is the instrument of 'a mediation which I can only describe as sacramental' in the sense that 'material things are invested with a spiritual meaning'. I do not know that I would have used that word, but surely the word 'mediation' is an essential quality of his poetry and indeed his attitude to life – as it is in the prose of Cervantes. Once more we come to the amusing practical matters: the effect of the 'mapping' not only of the scene but of the passions. Speaight adds one of his producer's groans:

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They fail to see that the death of the serpent is enhanced by the flash of the fishwife's tongue. Robert Speaight was a very gifted, unpretending man, a critic always alert to performance, always inquisitive.

Clive James

Quote Me

A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. II: H-N edited by R. W. Burchfield *Oxford* £22.00

Conscious of being by a long way the last reviewer to turn in a notice of the *OED* Supplement Vol. II, H-N, I can give a good excuse. I have read the whole thing. Not so much out of admiration for the way the work has been done – although my fellow critics are right, it's a superlative job – as out of obsession with the illustrative quotations. Only a certain, if large, proportion of these come from literary people. Of the literary people, only a proportion, and that a small one, are in the strict sense contemporary authors. Of the contemporary authors, only a handful are people one knows personally. Of the handful of contemporary authors one knows personally, it would be foolish to expect that one's own name would turn up. Yet you can bet your life that everyone who reviewed the book was secretly hoping to find himself in it somewhere. Just once would be enough. Please.

There is no quicker ticket to immortality than adding a phrase, or even just one little word, to the language. Think of Pepys, who churned out all those miles of stuff, yet people can only *say* two things he ever wrote ('Up betimes' and 'And so to bed'), whereas one of the people he wrote about, Lord Sandwich, got a word into the language just by slapping some meat between two slices of bread. It is doubtful, though, whether Lord Sandwich stood around on street corners flaunting his creation in the ostentatious hope that someone would name it after him. Very few people have ever added a word to the language by willing it. Look how hard J. B. Priestley tried with 'admass', yet it never caught on. You can fluke it, but you can't fix it.

Among the bright sparks about London at the moment, only James Fenton (a worthless critic of my poetry, but nimble in all other departments) has added something permanent to the mother tongue, for he it was who first conceived the euphemism 'talking about Uganda'. When *Private Eye* meaningfully whispers that two celebrities of opposite sexes have been discussing East African affairs, it is paying tribute to young Fenton, confound him. Can you wonder that his literary friends are cerise with envy? Yet the author of this by-now-indispensable contribution to the word-hoard would be the first to admit that he had no idea it would last even a single day. Nobody can tell in advance what the language needs.

Anyway, Uganda is still a long way away – it won't be turning up until Vol. IV – and in the book under scrutiny there are other successful coiners to be jealous of. Some critics have already noted, with barely concealed anger, that Martin Amis is in with 'ludic'. There has been something like a boycott of his father, Kingsley, who is among those authors cited for 'Lefty' but who as far as the editors are concerned might never have written *Lucky Jim*. If 'James Bond' is in the language then 'Lucky Jim' (or at least 'Lucky Jimmery', which is in frequent use) ought to be in as well. So should 'Jimmy Porter', but there is no mention of him, either: John Osborne only gets in for 'legit' (Archie Rice said it in *The Entertainer*). Some people just got lucky. Christopher Booker is in not only for 'neophiliac' but for 'Madison' to boot, simply because he happened to use it in a place where the editors saw it – i.e., in his book *The Neophiliacs*.

If they pick a word out of a book you wrote, you get a mention. If they pick a word out of an article you wrote, the paper or the magazine gets a mention but you, as a rule, don't. This will be a blow to Barry Humphries, who gets no credit for the many quotations from the 'Barry McKenzie' strip in *Private Eye*. One of the examples of 'infer' (i.e., in its incorrect meaning of 'imply') is drawn from the silver tongue of Bazza: 'I can't stand fellers who infer things about good clean-living Australian sheilahs.' The bronzed hero is also in for negotiating a *naughty*, but the nun's *nasty*, alas, does not feature. Nor does Eric Idle's 'nudge nudge' from *Monty Python* – a serious lacuna, since the term has had a wild success.

Of the younger ladies, Margaret Drabble is in but once, for 'lit. crit.'. *The Female Eunuch*, however, is quoted so often that the whole volume might as well have been called *Beauties from Germaine Greer*. With due allowance for envy on my part, I'm bound to say that Ms Greer seems to have made a big hit with the editors, who must have read her book to pieces. She is a fountain of examples not just on her own subject but on every other subject as well. She is in for 'Hollywoodise'. She is back a few entries later for 'hoodlumism'. She is in for 'inauthentic'. ('The altruism of women is merely the inauthenticity of the feminine person [shouldn't that be persona? – C. J.] carried over into behaviour'.) She is in for 'largactil', 'love-nest', 'Marcusian' . . . but enough. Face it, lads: old Germs is the Shakespeare of our generation.

Leaving aside William James (whose hundreds of mentions mainly depend on his habit of prefixing 'non-' to most of the nouns he came across), the title of Most-Mentioned Male goes without question to D. H. Lawrence. There is a tendency to

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Craig Raine

The Behaviour of Dogs

Their feet are four-leafed clovers
that leave a jig-saw in the dust.

They grin like Yale keys and tease
us with joke-shop Niagara tongues.

A whippet jack-knifes across the grass
to where the afghan's palomino fringe

is part Opera House curtain, part
Wild Bill Hickock. Its head

precedes the rest, balanced like
a tray, aloft and to the left.

The labrador cranks a village pump,
the boxer shimmies her rump,

docked to a door-knocker, and
the alsatian rattles a sabre –

only the ones with crewcuts fight.
Sportif, they scratch their itches

like one-legged cyclists sprinting
for home, pee like hurdlers,

shit like weightlifters, and relax
by giving each other piggy backs . . .

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down-grade Dr Leavis. He is not in for 'life-enhancing' – an unhistorical omission. (The credit is given variously to Stephen Spender, Bernard Berenson and the *Guardian*.) The entry for 'magazine' quotes the *Listener* to make him sound cranky. ('Leavis didn't apologise that his terms of reference should be the Robbins Report and Harold Wilson and the magazine sections of the English Sundays') and his own use of 'literarism' to make him sound paranoid ('The term "literarism" was in fact coined by the late Aldous Huxley for use against me.') But about Lawrence the editors have no reservations.

If Lawrence said it, in it goes. God, what that man knew about life. He is in for 'life-body', 'life-demand', 'life-divine', 'life-flow', 'life-meaning', 'life-idea', 'life-quick' ('Nowadays society is evil. It finds subtle ways to torture, to destroy the life-quick, to get at the life-quick in a man'), 'life-responsibility', 'life-stupid', 'life-urge', life-this and life-that. 'Life' was a word he worked to death – here is the proof. None of the Lawrentian life-compounds caught on, for the good reason that they were sheerly rhetorical.

Still, the obligation to read and report was there. It has been well fulfilled. There are gaps in the editors' range: S. J. Perelman, a lexical volcano, is in only for 'moxie', and in general you could say that the Oxonians are a bit square in their light reading. They have not looked often enough at *Rolling Stone*. On the other hand they are admirably up on buff fields like sf and jazz. (A bit light on television and movies, however.) Their newspapers are more posh than not: *TLS*, *Observer*, *Sunday Times*. But their books are usefully drawn from several levels of brow. Chris Bonington gets almost as many mentions as James Joyce. P. G. Wodehouse has been correctly identified as a rich source of vital slang precisely used. It is edifying to trace the use of 'Holocaust', in the sense of the destruction of the European Jews, all the way down to *The Odessa File*, by F. Forsyth: thus is a mandarin notion reduced to the vulgar tongue, where it must take its chances.

Mary McCarthy, Aldous Huxley, Jack Kerouac, Thomas Pynchon and Bernard Malamud have all used the word 'laundromat'. John O'Hara, John Dos Passos, Graham Greene, Angus Wilson, Harold Robbins, Herbert Gold, John Updike, W. H. Auden and Philip Roth have all used 'lay' in the sexual sense. But neither 'leg over' nor 'leg man' (as opposed to 'tit man') is in the entry under 'leg'.

One can quibble, but only just. The monumental labour is beyond reproach. At the end of the book I had only one real grievance. Let me shyly confess that both of the quotations under 'literatus' are from articles by me in the *TLS*, and one of the several quotations under 'no-no' is from an article by me in the *Observer*. Since *TLS* articles were still unsigned at the time I was writing, I suppose the Oxonians couldn't have realised. But hell, my name was at the bottom of the *Observer* piece. Couldn't they have bent their damned rule and jotted it down? Melvyn Bragg gets *his* name in, just for saying 'non-stop' in *Without a City Wall*. Still, two more volumes to go.

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Jeremy Isaacs

Grace Abounding

Facing the Nation: Television & Politics 1936-76 by GRACE WYNDHAM GOLDIE *Bodley Head* £7.50

Loud and clear in these pages is heard the authentic voice of the BBC: stern, responsible, conscious, with some justice, of duty done. Here, in a book which charts and crowns a life's work, Grace Wyndham Goldie has articulated, perhaps more forcibly than anyone since Reith, the ethos of the Corporation which has determined the tone of broadcasting in the United Kingdom, on all channels, claiming freedom by exercising responsibility, boasting of independence but paying due regard to the susceptibilities of the powers that be.

This is not a history of politics on British television. ITV, a latecomer admittedly, is scarcely treated. There is no mention, for example, of Granada's pioneer coverage in 1958 of the Rochdale by-election, when the BBC still did not trust itself to report the issues of an election campaign without at best imbalance and at worst an unforgivable influence on the result. Mrs Wyndham Goldie properly concentrates on what she saw done or what she did: the first election results programme; the first party political broadcasts; interviews with party leaders, with chancellors, with prime ministers; the birth of *Panorama*, and of *Tonight*; the killing off of *In the News* and of *That Was The Week That Was*. The narrative is lucid, comment pertinent, prescription invigorating: 'The style of *Panorama* was to be authoritative.' Dismissal is brisk:

> *Yesterday's Men*, a foolishly-clever undergraduate-type programme presented ostensibly as a serious study of Labour in Opposition which seniors in the Labour Party never forgot nor forgave.

Mrs Wyndham Goldie, from her seat in the television gallery, watched over Eden, Gaitskell, Butler, Macmillan, Home and Wilson. She gave good advice. She judged severely. She knew, as he did, that it was not the lighting that showed up Alec Douglas-Home on television, but his almost endearing inability to answer some of the questions he was bound to be asked. Yet although the politicians figure in her text, it is the BBC which pervades it. Hugh Carleton Greene's credo was uttered in an address entitled 'The Conscience of a Programme Director'. Enshrined here is the conscience of a producer, and of a producers' overlord, the department head.

There is always the balance to be kept; the producer must reconcile creativity with editorial responsibility; the reporter too must respect and work within the editorial responsibilities of the BBC and, less obviously, accept the ways in which the Corporation interpreted these responsibilities. Overt bias is to be eliminated at the root, unconscious bias searched out beforehand and, if detected in the event, chastised with rigour. A clear hierarchy of editorial responsibility must be maintained.

The book is not about the subject matter of current affairs, nor even about politics. It is about the codes which the BBC's television journalists, especially in current affairs, have been asked to practise, though they are far harder to practise than to preach, as those whose style was cramped have testified with feeling. Mrs Wyndham Goldie could not have prescribed or practised them had she not believed that self-discipline was a price worth paying to preserve the BBC's independence from corruption by commerce, or dictation by government. The Corporation would not be dictated to, though it might sometimes decide itself to abstain from what it might otherwise have been ordered not to do. Northern Ireland today poses a genuine dilemma for the broadcaster. Will there be further interviews with paramilitary spokesmen, with Sinn Fein, with the Provisional IRA? If we are at war with them, should there be any? The argument is real and continues. But transfer it to France at war in Algeria, let alone to the Soviet Union in *détente*, and it is not even a starter. The BBC is defending ground it has helped to gain, ground that matters.

The centralist notion of the BBC's responsibility for everything uttered in its airtime, and particularly in its prime television programmes, wears hard. It was easier to en-

MARCH 24

Exploring the Himalayas

When Men and Mountains Meet by John Keay is the extraordinary story of the resourceful if often eccentric explorers who in the mid-nineteenth century overcame both political and natural barriers to explore the most formidable mountain complex on earth, the Western Himalayas. This is a story that rivals the search for the sources of the Nile and the race for the South Pole. *12 pages of photographs, 7 line illustrations, 4 maps £6.50*

A century later Dervla Murphy was exploring the same region, accompanied by her six-year-old daughter. Having blooded Rachel in Coorg Dervla decided to take her on a tougher journey demanding real endurance and in **Where the Indus is Young** she describes their four months of midwinter travel through remote and sparsely populated valleys high in the mountains of Baltistan.
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JOHN MURRAY

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force when there was one channel only, when the medium was new, the producer, reporter and contributor privileged to be there. With three (soon perhaps four) television channels, radio proliferating and the telephone giving access to the air to every nut that ripens, new, looser modes will be added, more liberties taken, angry voices heard, passionate cases made. But the core of the old way somehow must be saved. New ground needs to be cleared in television's coverage of politics. We need party broadcasts at election times, but not through the years between. And we don't need party broadcasts disguised as ministerials, with a right of reply for the Opposition, and the Liberals popping up in a stage three discussion, disguised as current affairs, and with government having the last, as they had the first, word. There's a curiosity for you. The third party to the contract between politicians and the media is the public; they need facts, however unpalatable, and context, and opinions. They need access to argument in Parliament, and in Whitehall. They need to be told honestly what the choices are and that all of them hurt, including leaving things as they are. The television producer or reporter still needs something to post above the typewriter. Honesty, accuracy, fairness were good enough for Grace, and for the men and women she trained. Will we do better?

Martin Amis

The Bad Bits

William Burroughs: The Algebra of Need
by ERIC MOTTRAM *Marion Boyars* £5.95

Like many novelists whose modernity we indulge, William Burroughs is essentially a writer of 'good bits'. These good bits don't work out or add up to anything; they have nothing to do with the no-good bits: and they needn't be in the particular books they happen to be in. Most of Burroughs is trash, and lazily obsessive trash too – you could chuck it all out and not diminish what status he has as a writer. But the good bits are good. Reading him is like staring for a week at a featureless sky; every few hours a bird will come into view or, if you're lucky, an aeroplane might climb past, but things remain meaningless and monotone. Then, without warning (and not for long, and for no coherent reason, and almost always in *The Naked Lunch*), something happens: abruptly the clouds grow warlike, and the air is full of portents.

The good bits are so fortuitous, indeed (mere reflexes of a large and callous talent), and the no-good bits so monolithic, that the critic's role is properly reduced to one of helpless quotation. Here is a good bit; this is another good bit; take, for example, this good bit. Eric Mottram, however, in his adoring and humourless new study, swallows Burroughs whole: every section of jaded agit-prop, every page of trite assertion and denatured rhetoric, every abstract noun

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EDITED BY FRANK FIELD

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finds an honoured place in the inter-disciplinarian's filing-system. John Fletcher, general editor of this Critical Appraisals series, says that to qualify for inclusion writers need to be 'demonstrably "masterly" in the sense of having made a real impact on the contemporary arts' (I think he must mean 'modern-masterly'). Mr Mottram, anyway, has unsmilingly accepted the brief. His book is, in effect, about the bad bits.

Here are two of the funnier insensitivities ensured by this approach. There is, by common consent, a great deal about drugs in Burroughs's five main novels (or 'tetralogy', as they are here typically dignified). Many of his characters are junkies, they talk about junk a lot, their senses – in common with Burroughs's prose – are peeled by junk: on junk, says Burroughs, 'familiar objects seem to stir with a writhing furtive life'. From Mr Mottram's Delphic lectern, though, 'the junk world is the image of the whole world as a structure of addiction and controls'. Well, this is the radical falsification line of the Beat school, and fair enough in its way. But evaluative criticism of Burroughs (and all criticism of living authors should be evaluative) would be far better off with the unglamorous premise that Burroughs was just a junkie himself, that he got lost for a long time in the junk world, and that it is in this reality that his imagination – and his style – has been conclusively formed. An index of Mr Mottram's futile reverence is that he seldom refers to Burroughs as 'being dependent on' drugs, or 'taking' drugs, or even 'using' drugs. What Burroughs does is 'experiment' with them. (At one point Mr Mottram pictures Burroughs 'experimenting' with *alcohol*. I hereby confess that, during his longer chapters, I conducted a few experiments with the stuff myself.)

Burroughs's militant homosexuality, also, is seen as yet another suave literary device. Mr Burroughs doesn't really like women: one feels safe in this observation, since he has gone on record with the vow that he would kill every woman alive if he could. Although this is not in itself a criticism of his *writing*, it is certainly a clue to it. But here is Mottram, in a biographical stroll-in:

> Burroughs returned to the academy to study psychology . . . Then he went to Mexico (where he accidentally killed his wife with a revolver), and on a GI grant, studied native dialects and was able to obtain drugs with comparative absence of legal restriction.

That parenthesis is all she rates. Similarly – and to take only the most spectacular example – Burroughs's obtrusive interest in the sexual hanging of young boys (orgasm to be synchronised with the pathetic voiding at the moment of death) is duly accorded the status of a 'symbol', a symbol, in this case, of 'critical anarchism'. So it is, though not in the sense intended. At no point will Mr Mottram admit a human value. He does not answer to any of the gods we answer to: he sits up late at night, listening for the knock of The Semiologic Police.

Burrough's principal 'theme' – in that he goes on about it more than he goes on about anything else – is 'control', social, sexual and political. Mr Mottram annotates this theme with some rigour (his book has good bits too), and he does draw haphazard attention to the things that make Burroughs worth looking at: his great scenes of interrogation and manipulation, the desolate evil of his wound-down cities and inert, vicious bureaucracies, that sense of wasted and predoomed humanity which animates his best writing. What Mr Mottram never addresses himself to, however, is the question of artistic control, of the artist's control of his material and his talent. Control is not something one grafts on to natural ability: it is part of that ability. Burroughs has vacated the control tower, if indeed he ever went up there. No living writer has so perfidiously denied his own gifts – most of which are,

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Donald Davie

Syracuse

The one in the poem is not
The one that you will visit.
The city you may visit,
The poem also – one
Casts no light on the other.

Through the one there strays
One and one only walker.
The other has its claim
Upon the one who can
Meet it in curious ways.

By brilliant turn of phrase?
No. For it is the past
Is brilliant, Pasternak says;
The debt we owe it, only
More modest coin repays

As in the verdant, man-made
Latomia, a grotto
Loud with seepage houses
No lonely inscrutable Tristan
And Iseult, but a rope-walk.

Ropemakers gone from under
Mottled impendings, still
Their hempen gossamers ran
Taut and knee-high through the shafted
Light and the cavernous air.

Gratitude, Need, and Gladness –
These are the names of the walker,
These are the strands of the hemp:
Gladness at meeting the need
The gratitude imposes.

This is our walker's scope.
You think he makes too bold?
To make this visit, think
Of how to test a rope:
Swing on it, trust it to hold.

A gimcrack drum with spikes,
Knee-high, the T-shaped stretchers . . .
This is the phrase he will use:
Warm honesties of makeshift
Transvalue Syracuse.

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incidentally, comic and exuberant rather than admonitory and bleak. It may be his just reward, then, to be studied by people who don't find him funny.

Isabel Quigly

Superwoman

Catherine the Great by JOAN HASLIP
Weidenfeld £6.95

Catherine the Great of Russia wasn't Russian and wasn't even called Catherine until her betrothal, when she was rebaptised into the orthodox church (the lover she made King of Poland called her Sophie to the end; the strong German accent remained with her as well). And Great? Well, she was outsize – in presence, in appetites, in energy, even in achievement if you consider the odds. Joan Haslip thinks she would have deserved the title if she had stuck to her youthful determination to free the serfs, instead of which she enslaved 2 million more, to pay off lovers and politicians and all sorts of debts of gratitude.

An obscure German princess in a hard-up family, she was by a series of lucky chances married to the Grand Duke Peter, nephew and heir of Peter the Great's daughter, the Empress Elizabeth. In personal terms this piece of amazing political good fortune proved a disaster – they hated each other – and in the most dissolute court of the day the hot-blooded Catherine managed, while sharing her bed with Peter and his toy soldiers, to remain a virgin for nine years. Her duty done at last and the inheritance secured, she started on the series of lovers that was to continue until her death. Husbandly and sedate, these were picked one after the other, examined by a doctor for health and by a discreet friend for efficiency in bed beforehand, handsomely pensioned off afterwards, loaded with riches and honours while in service. About the social or the physical side of it, Catherine seemed to have been totally unembarrassed. In her mid-sixties, so hugely fat that she took up two seats in the theatre and had ramps built because she could scarcely walk upstairs, she had a handsome lover in his twenties, almost her grandson's contemporary, whom she still managed to exhaust. The paintings – and court painters surely flattered as much as they could – show her as a stout, elderly woman even in middle age; as an undeniably old one, whitehaired, coarse-featured, many-chinned, in her final years. Yet she never looked at her lovers merely as sexual appeasers, as studs: she wanted friendship, chat, amusement, even love, a mind as well as a body to admire and the illusion that she was desired: and so she was hurt, again and again, by their indifference or greed or infidelity.

With a personal life as intense, a non-stop string of passionate involvements, one wonders how she found energy or time for the vast amount of work she got through: 12 to 15 hours a day with her ministers, endless political activity not just at home but on a European scale (with dreams of Byzantium and an Eastern influence thrown in), for she was determined to follow Peter the Great in making Russia a European power; large-scale building projects, art collections amassed, schools founded, education spread all over the empire, lengthy correspondence with the French philosophers (Voltaire and Diderot in particular). In the gaps, for miraculously there were some, she wrote plays for court performance, danced, travelled, went on pilgrimages, played with her grandchildren, took a close interest in the Smolny Institute she had founded and the 500 girls it educated, wrote her memoirs and, for additional fun, translated Plutarch into Russian. The current lover came each evening and was dismissed at midnight. At six she was up and had six cups of coffee so strong they gave palpitations to anyone who happened to turn up for breakfast (a pound of coffee was used on them each day). Her energy was monstrous but in a way amusing; you give it a whistle of dismayed belief.

And she was more than just busy, she got things done. In a country that was 90 per cent illiterate and deeply anti-German she raised standards in plenty of fields and made her obviously German self loved, feared, even Russianised and, right across Europe, at least reckoned with and treated gingerly,

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with respect. She enslaved the 2 million peasants and carved up Poland, shut her eyes to the murder of her husband, favoured his murderers for the rest of their lives and probably ordered the killing of her only surviving rival, the pathetic wreck of the last adult Romanov; but in some ways, for her time, she was as liberal and forward-looking as she was vigorous and adaptable. A protean creature, she liked to appear enlightened while acting tyrannically, and even in tyrannous action was capable of amazing generosity and large-heartedness. Age and necessity killed the youthful liberalism but never the youthful heart. 'I enjoy as much as a child of five . . . blind-man's buff and all childish games,' she wrote at 65, 'and I still love to laugh.' A hard sentimentalist, a monster, jolly yet cold-eyed; a woman of steel and marshmallow.

Joan Haslip has written biographies of all sorts of people in all sorts of places and periods (Parnell, Lucrezia Borgia, Elizabeth of Austria), so she certainly isn't writing for specialists and/or historians. As popular biography this book isn't bad, since she has a rather novelistic ability to bring its characters alive. But it isn't very well written; it is rambling, repetitive, and the shockingly bad proof-reading adds to its air of stylistic carelessness. Still, it isn't boring, and that's a good deal in 400 large, quite closely printed pages. In fiction, plot doesn't (or at least shouldn't) matter, in biography it clearly does. And here the extraordinary story carries things briskly along and makes you keep turning the page.

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DENT

Philip Ziegler

Those Things

Spooner: A Biography by WILLIAM HAYTER
W. H. Allen £4.95

Dons, as such, are remembered only by their eccentricities; some achieve fame in peripheral activities but these are regarded with suspicion if not hatred by their peers. The British public knows well that dons are remote and ineffectual, bemused by good living, frequently malign. As on most subjects, the British public is often right.

William Spooner, Warden of New College from 1903 to 1924, was no exception to the first of these rules. But for the linguistic lapses to which he has given his name he would today be totally forgotten. And yet he was curiously formidable. 'The most feared man in New College,' an American described him, 'a little aged albino with gleaming false teeth who blinked and smiled and ruled his roost.' He could be uncannily perceptive. Addressing an undergraduate, he began:

> 'I think when you came up to Oxford you had every intention of taking Holy Orders?'
> The undergraduate concurred.
> 'And I am afraid that you have quite abandoned the idea?'
> 'Oh rather, yes, quite, Mr Warden, quite given it up.'
> 'And what do you propose to do?'
> 'Well, I want to be a schoolmaster . . .'
> 'Oh yes, a schoolmaster, really. Well, Mr Woolley, I have decided that you shall be an archaeologist.'

Until that time, Sir Leonard Woolley later commented, 'I was not quite sure what an archaeologist was, but there was no gainsaying Warden Spooner, so I became one.'

Though no reformer Spooner had some disconcertingly liberal ideas. He admired the 'healthy admixture of classes' to be found in the grammar schools and deplored the 'horizontal layers' into which the public school system cut society. He insisted that the names of German old members of the College killed in the first world war should be posted in chapel alongside those who died on the Allied side: 'They too are members of the College, and they too have given their lives for their country.' He was a devout Anglican, but only because it was 'the best working hypothesis that has yet been invented'. He was tolerant in most things and moderate in all.

But these are not heroic qualities and Spooner was no hero. 'I rather detest all kinds of Responsibility,' he wrote, and declined the Vice-Chancellorship when it was offered him. He was curiously pre-occupied with outward show: criticising Cambridge society as 'rather second-rate and ill-dressed', deploring the fact that modern undergraduates spent too little 'on the niceties of dress' and expensive furniture. Though he praised Lewis Carroll's 'curious original unexpected' mind, Carroll failed to return the compliment, refusing an invitation to dinner on the grounds that he did not want to waste an evening 'bandying small-talk with dull people'.

Like most dons, Spooner relished his reputation for oddity. His inability to remember names, no doubt largely genuine, became a tool with which to amuse or disconcert. A certain J. B. Murgatroyd was given a blistering rebuke for misbehaviour. Taken aback, he inquired about his crime. Spooner 'shuffled his papers, asked Murgatroyd his name, then stretched out his hand and said, "I, ah, am very pleased, um, to inform you that you have been awarded the Longstaffe Exhibition".' Sir William Hayter reviews the classic Spoonerisms – the cat falling from a window which 'popped on its drawers', the 'half-warmed fish' that each of us feels in our heart – and concludes that almost all were the creation of undergraduate wits. But a few real Spoonerisms were recorded, as well as startling transpositions of ideas – a comment on a lady dressed in black: 'Poor soul, very sad; her late husband, you know, a very sad death, eaten by missionaries.' Most bizarre of all were the Spoonerisms acted out in life, as when he upset some salt on the table and reversed the traditional procedure by carefully pouring claret on to the resultant mess.

Some of these may have been in part intentional, but certainly not all. There is a wistful note in the final sentence of his speech at his last Gaudy: 'And now I suppose you will expect me to say one of *those things*.' To be a legend in your own lifetime is one thing but to owe your legendary status to a largely mythical confusion of mind must sometimes have been galling.

William Hayter, though himself recently Warden of New College, is better known as one of the most civilised of British Ambassadors. He has handled this life of his predecessor with wit, urbanity and sympathy. Both author and subject deserve well of the College they served so diligently.

Gavin Ewart

Life-Style

The farmyard squeals in the breakfast bacon
The sun is shining in the noble vintage
The eggs are clucking in the honourable omelette
The wheat is windswept in the loaves we love so
In the beefburgers the bulls are bellowing
The peat-clean water wobbles through the whisky
The calmness of cows murmurs in the milk

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Bryan Wilson

All Saints

Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society 1850-1960 by SUSAN BUDD *Heinemann* £9.50

That there has been a crisis of unbelief just as much as there has been a crisis of belief is one of the unnoticed paradoxes of our time. Put another way, one may say that secularisation – the process in which reference to the supernatural loses social significance – implies not only, and most obviously, the decline of religion, but also the decline of secularism as an ideology, since secularism really flourishes only when there is a vigorous religious tradition against which it can be pitted.

Secularists strictly so-called – the anti-clerical working-class atheists who saw state and church linked in a continuing conspiracy against the workers and against free inquiry and free speech – are only one of the species of sceptics who fall under Dr Budd's scrutiny. Rationalists, Comtean Positivists, Ethicists, Humanists and, in lesser measure, the Labour Churches and Liberal Judaism, complete her catalogue of organised unbelievers. Their unbelief, always in the Church, might extend to Christianity as a system, to Christ, and sometimes to religion *tout court*. What they did *not* believe was, in a sense, never a problem: it was this that brought them together. It was, all too often, what they *did* believe, that drove them apart, since atheism became readily embroiled with sundry causes – neo-Malthusianism; eugenics; Henry George tax reform; vegetarianism – each of which might be offered as a global panacea, as an alternative to religion.

Unbelief has proved to be a poor social cement. Although agnostics grew in number from the mid-19th century, and active Christians diminished relative to population from not long after this, none of the organisations of unbelievers ever commanded the active support of more than a few thousands at any one time, and usually of not more than a few hundreds, and the turnover rates have always been high. In the 19th century in particular, many of those who found their way into such movements did so after losing a strong religious faith (in more than a few cases, Dr Budd tells us, as a consequence of an unsatisfactory encounter with a high-handed priest). But their anti-clerical or anti-Christian commitment was often no more than a staging post for people abandoning a religious world-view for a more political perspective. Even in the 1880s, at the highwater mark of Secularism, some were already being drained off by the appeal of Hyndman's socialism, and in the 1890s by the newly formed ILP.

All these movements have had difficulty in deciding on their purpose and their activities. In the early days, Bible-bashing or the rejection of priestly mediators was enough. Then, with more fervour than logic, the Secularist could announce, as one

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did to Stuart Headlam in one of his Christian Socialist lectures, 'Atheist as I am, sir, atheist as I am, no man shall stand between my soul and my God.' Later, as the Nonconformist spirit sagged, and as the Bible became a less ready point of reference for Christians (who often knew it less well than their Secularist opponents), militant atheism itself became quaintly passé.

What then was affirmative about Secularism or Humanism? No clear answer was forthcoming, and even into the 1960s the same question was being asked with extraordinary frequency by Humanists of the editors of their own periodicals – how is Humanism to be defined? The discussion had not come far since George Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh had sustained their interminable debate about the limits of their creed, the appropriate style for the presentation of their case, and the political alliances in which it was expedient to engage. Then as now, as the militant Bradlaugh paraded its virtue, tolerance has had to be the touchstone to hold organised unbelievers together. When, however, Bradlaugh involved himself in publishing ill-written tracts on birth control, his neo-Malthusian enthusiasm proved too much for the now respectable Holyoake, and the ill-assorted champions of 19th-century free speech were driven apart.

Abstract analysis of organisational cohesion never weighs down Dr Budd's absorbing narrative, but it provides an underlying theme that is sustained in the discussion of Ethicists and Positivists who, despite their hot pursuit of the rational ethic, saw the church as the organisational model for the fellowship of non-Christians. Stanton Coit, who transformed the West London Ethical Society into the Ethical Church, saw no reason why the liberation of morals from their Christian connection should lead to the abandonment of what he believed to be the valuable rituals of religious association. With hymns, meditation, lessons, canticles and abundant ceremony he created a type of non-Christian High Anglicanism. Others found the balance harder to strike. The leader of the Liverpool Comteans complained:

> We lay under a peculiar disadvantage in choosing hymns at first. All the warm, poetical ones – those having colour and human feeling and sympathy – were decidedly theological in language. Then, hymns free from this, and tolerably humanly pious in thought, we found to be of the cold Unitarian tinge, and very unmoving.

The Ethicists and Positivists undoubtedly wanted to be moved, but the Rationalists, who were much more impersonally drawn together as the subscribers to the Rationalist Press Association, which had developed out of the old Secularist schism, rejected the need for association, while the Humanists, when they emerged, adopted the old alternative of being a debating society. Free speech became again the cardinal virtue, even though it exposed them to the discourse of all manner of cranks and faddists. Eventually it led them to the paradox of declaring that minority religions should not be arbitrarily interfered with: authority, rather than religion itself, had become the fully identified bogey.

The secularised society has come into being far less as a consequence of the campaign of secularist ideologues than through the implementation of scientific and technical procedures. When most men do not believe, or believe little, and that not with much conviction, the secularist creed can be little more than an appeal for reason in human affairs. In an age when men are aware of more subtle psychologies than Bradlaugh dreamed of, secularism acquires a shallow look, and secular fellowships appear more friable than ever. But their history – so well told in this book – is, quite apart from its intrinsic interest, a significant commentary on the problems of our own times, as well as of theirs. One can admire the new lofty vision of Moncure Conway at South Place, and his sure social touch, but one must sympathise much more deeply with Stanton Coit, aware in a Durkheimian way that man needed a new moral sense, and that society was its only source, but bewildered as he groped in archaic rituals for the means by which to bring men to this realisation.

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Off the Cuff

Lyrics on Several Occasions by IRA GERSHWIN *Hamish Hamilton* £4.95

In the beginning was the Music. Or so it is with Ira Gershwin. Most of the lyrics in this selection were written to music already composed, though what really comes first, he tells us, is the contract. Cracks apart, many wincingly arch, this is a priceless handbook for lyricists, would-be and practising. It contains over 100 lyrics, with comments on their provenance, birth-pangs, anecdotes and secrets of the craft – no, graft. Writing lyrics is the hardest of grafts. Words that are clear, simple and singable are born of agonising labour. If you can see the sweat and smell the scotch, it's a bad lyric. Of course there are exceptions. Forty years ago Ira and his brother George created a classic in under an hour. But rarely, rarely comest a natural like 'A Foggy Day in London Town'.

The best of Ira's work is unforgettable – 'Love is Here to Stay', 'Embraceable You', 'Love Walked In' – and the worst is appallingly laboured. The off-days are worth examining.

'The Man That Got Away' (belted out by Judy Garland in *A Star is Born*, 1954) includes the line 'with hope you burn up' and this wrenching reversal of everyday speech is set up to rhyme with the next line – 'Tomorrow he may turn up'. The book brims with similar distortions. Fran Landesman puts it down to Ira's Mittel-European Jewish background – 'Picasso it ain't.'

Still, Ira's knowledge of poetic style is impressive. He is as familiar with masculine, feminine, assonantal, internal and apocopated rhyme as he is with French verse forms. In his late teens he 'fooled around' with the triolet, the villanelle and the

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rondeau. He is an authority on the 'vest', the 'release' and the 'bridge', familiar terms to the songwriter, if not to the layman. He has much to teach about the sheer technique of shaping a line that is both workable and witty:

> I'm there at ev'ry State Ball
> But behind the 8-ball with you.

He wrote for most of the great popular composers – his brother, Jerome Kern, Harold Arlen and Kurt Weill. Big names crop up on every page, the most unlikely being Maecenas Otto H. Kahn, a backer who could have been a Groucho Marx character or one of W. C. Fields's numerous pseudonyms.

Lyrics are to be read with the ear, not the eye. Be literate, but not literary. The cliché is 'an integral part of lyric-writing'. What looks trite on the page can spring to life when fused with the appropriate music. The lyricist must have a feeling for music and the needs of the singer, besides a talent for versification. Despite all the care taken to ensure clarity in sense and sound, ambiguity occasionally creeps in. One passage in 'My Ship', music by Kurt Weill, originally ran:

> I can wait for years
> Till it appears,
> One fine day one spring.

Gertrude Lawrence asked Ira, 'Why *four* years, why not five or six?' Neither Gershwin nor Weill had noticed that the preposition 'for' carried the same musical value as 'wait' and 'years'. So 'for' was changed to 'the'. A detail? That's the name of the song.

Simplicity is all. Making the words sound like 'something off the cuff' means working yourself into the ground and into the early smoke-filled hours. A novel, a play, even a poem, can be a flawed masterpiece. The lyric has to be perfect or it is nothing. Easy it isn't.

Charles Fox

Discolatry

Jazz Retrospect by MAX HARRISON *David & Charles* £5.95

Jazz musicians have always been keen on getting paid for what they do. Jazz critics, on the other hand, have often been amateurs, full of evangelistic fervour, never queasy about dragging in superlatives. Even Hugues Panassié, whose *Hot Jazz*, published in Paris in 1934, was really the first book to erect a jazz aesthetic, was motivated – at the start, anyway – by naked hero-worship.

High romanticism entered with *Jazzmen* (1939), a set of essays by authors much beguiled by the way jazz had operated in the seamier strata of American society, that world of Basin Street madams, where blues pianists got murdered with ice-picks. There were to be more sober historical accounts,

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some useful biographies, many diligent discographical works (jazz scholars virtually invented this useful activity). But criticism was all too frequently a matter of selecting luminous adjectives.

Yet, one by one, worthwhile books crept out: Sidney Finkelstein's *Jazz: A People's Music* (1948), Marxist yet never dogmatic; André Hodier's *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence* (1954); Gunther Schuller's *Early Jazz* (1968); Martin Williams's *The Jazz Tradition* (1970). British writers, notably Iain Lang and E. J. Hobsbawm ('Francis Newton' of the NS), were good at giving social perspective. In 1975 five of the best local critics, headed by Max Harrison, collaborated on *Modern Jazz: 1945-70, The Essential Records* (Aquarius Books £2.90), pricey for a paperback but admirably rigorous. And now Harrison has brought out a collection of his own essays and reviews.

Scope is what separates critics from ordinary reviewers, the ability to spot the ratio between the general and the particular. Which is why Harrison sees in James P. Johnson not just one of the finest pianists of the Twenties, not even – hoisting the periscope a trifle – a prime transformer of ragtime into jazz, but a man who embodied the New York musicians' incessant curiosity. Like Liszt and Chopin – and later on, Art Tatum – he saw virtuosity as a catalyst, able to extend the art as well as the instrument.

A similar attitude leads to reassessments of two other New Yorkers, Red Nichols and Miff Mole, heroes of the first generation of British jazz buffs (just before the war the *Melody Maker* was still printing letters claiming that Nichols out-ranked Armstrong) and out of favour for far too long. Harrison even mounts a good case for Paul Whiteman, viewed for a long time as little more than Bix Beiderbecke's kindly gaoler.

Not that Harrison is obsessed with rehabilitating the unfashionable. Much more characteristic is the breadth of his sympathies, the way he perceives the kinship between an unaccompanied field holler and Ornette Coleman's open-ended and unanchored improvising. Between those like-minded extremes stretched an historical development which leant heavily upon European practices, especially the complication of harmony. Neither Armstrong nor Charlie Parker, Harrison insists, were innovators as Coleman was.

Afro-American music, of course, is wide open to trendy interpretation. Harrison, on the other hand, wears his elitism without embarrassment ('Most habitual jazz listeners are quite primitive in their responses,' he writes on only the second page of his introduction). Perhaps he carries detachment too far. While admitting that the music has been shaped by social surroundings, he sticks, in practice, to what was put on record. In that he is close to Panassié and those older European critics whose isolation from what used to be the music's headquarters led them to concentrate on discs rather than live performances. Anyway, Harrison would argue, it is only on records that jazz will survive.

Misprints, alas, abound, marring what is an important book. Harrison himself slips up only occasionally (Billy Strayhorn's 'Overture To A Jam Session' gets attributed to Duke Ellington). Elsewhere he demonstrates impeccable professionalism, drawing knowledgeable parallels, distinguishing between fascinating mavericks and those musicians who have extended the language and forms of jazz.

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In this selected edition is included the long sequence **Mortal Fire,** on the theme of everyman, drawn with extensive revision from the Macmillan editions of **The Storms** (1968) and **Mortal Fire** (1970) extended with a new love sequence, **The Going.** Also included are samples of his translation of Villon and from the Cankam and the new play in verse **Cell.**
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Post-Imperial

Staying On by PAUL SCOTT *Heinemann* £3.9(
The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin by VLADIMIR VOINOVICH *Cape* £4.95

'Most stations had their Smalleys,' Paul Scott remarked of Major (later Colonel) 'Tusker' Smalley and his vicarage-bred wife Lucy, walk-on characters in *The Towers of Silence* (1971):

> Because they looked nondescript and unambitious they provoked no envy and hardly any suspicion. In Pankot, where they had been since the end of 1941, they arrived at parties harmoniously together and then put distance between them as if to distribute their humdrum selves in as many parts of the room as possible. Leaving, they did so arm-in-arm, giving an impression that by playing their separate parts in a communal endeavour something integral to their private lives and mutual affection had been maintained.

The whole passage about the couple is a typically deft, ironic maquette. All Scott's sketches look as though he could easily make sculptures out of them. This is certainly true of the minor characters in *Staying On* – a post-Bangladesh sequel to the Anglo-Indian tetralogy of which *The Towers of Silence* was volume three – and in it the insignificant Smalleys have become the centre of interest.

Unlike the rest of the English community Tusker and Lucy stayed on in Pankot in their boarding-house annexe, now overshadowed by the five-storey Punjabi-owned Shiraz Hotel. Unknown to them, their 16-stone landlady Mrs Bhoolabhoy is selling out to the consortium that owns the Shiraz despite the muted protests of her dapper highly-sexed little husband, a drinking companion of Tusker's. One of her ways of harassing her tenants is to neglect the upkeep of their garden which quickly reverts to jungle in the damp shade the Shiraz provides. Symbolic stuff, then – 'We are people in shadow, Ibrahim,' Lucy tells their servant – but the implications are never as hard-won as a précis is bound to suggest.

Scott knows and sees his characters very well indeed, whether in visual details or in his long, painful exposure of the old couple's mutual reticence. Lucy's fears and nostalgia are squeezed out alternately in hysteria and in a kind of theatrical but self-deprecatory soliloquy-life; and Tusker's regrets about his mismanagement of their affairs and failure to articulate his love for her are scribbled down in an awkward last-minute note: 'You've been a good woman

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to me, Luce. Sorry I've not made it clear I think so. I'm not going to read all this rigmarole through when I've finished – if I did I'd tear it up.'

These indirections in the relationship give exceptional authenticity to the scrambled narrative-line. *Staying On* begins and ends with Tusker's death, a focal event which (like Tristram Shandy's birth) draws together an anti-chronological, fragmented story pieced together in letters, the couple's memories and other people's conversations. But if in organization *Staying On* is expressively oblique, Tusker's death gives it – particularly in the closing chapters – the emotional concentration of Tolstoy's 'The Death of Ivan Ilych'. It's the saddest fiction I've read for a long time.

One of the funniest, too, with its cameos of social life in Pankot, seesawing between the Shiraz and St John's Church, Holi and Easter, and its ear for the inhabitants' polydialectal English. Good jokes are more plentiful here than in the robustly jolly *Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin*, a cross between Gogol's *The Government Inspector* and a Soviet version of *Dad's Army*. Private Chonkin, the blunt, stupid, loyal anti-hero, is left to guard a Soviet biplane which has crashed on a remote kolkhoz in 1941. In all the excitement of the German invasion of Russia he gets forgotten. The aeroplane has landed next to a smallholding kept by Nyura, a girl locally rumoured to have unnatural relations with her livestock, and Chonkin soon moves his machinery into her enclosure. Their neighbour, embittered when Nyura's cow destroys his experimental crop of tomatoes grafted on to potato roots, reports Chonkin's presence in the area, which is interpreted by the authorities as the arrival of an advance German force. Three battalions surround the neighbourhood. After some well-developed confusions Chonkin both wins and loses the satisfying large-scale battle that follows.

By pre-revolutionary standards the satire on rural life and bureaucracy is pretty tame, but perhaps not so to modern Russian readers. Voinovich, a friend of Zakharov, has been harried by Soviet officials and says that an attempt has been made to poison him. The publishers quote Hedrick Smith as saying that 'to read his ironic prose in the comfort of a Western living room is to underestimate his daring'. Certainly Voinovich manages some uncompromising satire in an episode between a romper-room operative and a victim who has claimed (truthfully, it turns out) to be called Stalin. He gets the traditional comic mileage, too, out of the corruption, inefficiency and self-interest of minor bureaucrats. All the same, most of the comedy – the ending apart – lacks bite, either because it relies on simple verbal accounts of slapstick gags, or because its situations fail to accumulate, or both. There are some good moments, and some unexpectedly tender ones. Waking to find himself in Nyura's bedroom for the first time, Chonkin is embarrassed but, 'not wanting to show it, he strode over . . . took her hand in his, shook it gently, and said: "How do you do?"' Here as elsewhere, though, you don't know how far to trust the very patchy translation, and the general effect is rough-hewn.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Andrew Saint

The Laurel and the Willow

The Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition
Olympia

They were hauling up the pediment of Buckingham Palace as I watched the Ideal Home Exhibition being put up at a bare Olympia a fortnight ago. Ten days later at the press view, this Beaux-Arts backdrop was complete and dominant, with a cardboard Victoria Memorial in front and an *ersatz* royal coach down below in the centre of the turmoil, incongruously flanked by five genuine full-size show houses. The stands stretched into the distance, becoming duly less domestic and less ideal as they receded from the gracious centrepiece as far as the remote realities of biscuits and beer. In between, one ran the gamut of furnishings, tools, gadgets and all the implements of DIY and gardencraft, in row upon worthy row. Somewhere in the background Sir Keith Joseph was intoning the virtues of private enterprise while opening one of the show houses; closer to hand Penelope Keith – in one of her floppiest and most suburban hats, she was an equally appropriate mascot for the exhibition – was cutting the tape outside another.

If you're looking for a theme, the Jubilee just about pulls the exhibition together this year, but on the whole it's best not to do that. The visitor intent upon consistency or patriotically concerned about the standards of British 'design' will be disappointed; better instead to wallow in its loose, catholic but ingenious nature and to see it as a display of middle-class aspirations viewed through the spectacles of commercial interest. It seems always to have been much like this. When Northcliffe sponsored the first Ideal Home Exhibition in 1908 as part of a shrewd campaign to establish the *Daily Mail* as a 'home' and 'family' paper, it was to be a profit-making venture geared towards advertising and circulation. The result was not only something of a hotchpotch but also overlapped considerably with the existing Building Trades Exhibition. Nevertheless it was a resounding success and was repeated in 1910, 1912 and 1913. In these years the idea of some kind of focus soon emerged, in the shape of successive make-believe Tudor, Dutch and Russian villages. After the war the exhibition became an annual event, nine-tenths commerce and one-tenth theme. Sometimes the subject had a serious purpose, as in 1930 when an attempt to concentrate on the woman's role resulted in *The House that Jill Built* (inevitably followed in 1931 by *The House that Jack Built*). Of recent years the theme has become unimaginatively predictable and marketable.

One persistently serious theme to the show has, however, remained present or latent over the years, and that is housing. The Ideal Home Exhibition began at exactly the moment when rented accommodation was starting on its inexorable decline, when owner-occupation was becoming common and when the Victorian problem of urban slums was first being interpreted as that of a national housing shortage. The early exhibitions were imbued with the principles of the 'Garden City' and particularly concerned themselves with the question of how to build the 'cheap cottage'. In connection with the very first one, three prizes were offered for cottage designs which could be built for £500, £750 and £1,000, the competition was assessed by Lutyens and the winners (whose designs were displayed) were architects almost as well-known. In 1910 a single 'ideal house' (costing £600 and built by Holloways) was for the first time constructed slap in the middle of the arena, and in 1913 the two ideas came together, with a more elaborate cottage competition sponsored by the *Daily Mail* and a further house built at the exhibition, this time to the designs of Ralph Knott, architect of London's County Hall.

As a result of the housing crisis that followed the first world war it became clearer that boroughs and big builders rather than the private individuals who frequented the exhibition were the vital clients for cottage designs. So the emphasis changed from the possible to the actual, from house designs to houses that could actually be bought from the builders who constructed and displayed them at the show. Northcliffe's newspapers continued to concern themselves with the house question, by sponsoring further architectural competitions, by issuing an annual *Daily Mail Book of House Plans* (an intriguing publication that still continues), and in 1920 by going so far as to build a small 'ideal village' entitled 'Dailymail', adjoining Welwyn Garden City. But none of these projects was directly connected with the Ideal Home Exhibition, where the houses displayed provided prestigious advertising for their builders and showcases for selected furnishings and fittings. These houses became the prototype for many a suburban development, and in several cases the originals were themselves re-erected. Pinner, for instance, boasts among its quainter Tudor houses one called Monk's Rest, Hillside Road, shown at the exhibition of 1924. And not far away, at 2 Beverley Gardens, Stanmore, can be seen an unaltered example of the more functional 'Jubilee' house designed for the 1935 exhibition by Davis Estates, an old-established firm who this year display their 1977 equivalent. The Stanmore house is still in excellent trim and inhabited by its original owner, who following a visit to the exhibition bought it for £700; today it is worth a cool £18,000.

Though Davis Estates proudly and justly point to the great interior advantages of their 1977 'Jubilee' house over the 1935 model, one misses anything as flash and stylish as the rounded corners, long metal windows and jazzy alternation of brick and roughcast evident at 2 Beverley Gardens in any of the house exteriors on display this year. They are all thorough but candidly rather dull. Barratts, for instance, a northern group which claims to be the biggest builders of private houses in the country, have spliced together a couple of their latest designs for newly-weds, the 'Laurel' and the 'Willow'; the planning seems to be good but the genteel Georgian exterior details, if more cheerful than nothing at all, do not make much impression.

Nevertheless there is one aspect of regular architectural interest in the modern show homes and that is timber-framed construction, which is making gradual ground in both the private and the public sectors of the British housing market. Over the last seven years a small Redhill firm called Architectural Services has shown a sequence of smart houses, mostly derived from Canadian and American models, that can be built either in the ordinary way or as a timber frame clad with traditional materials. The advantages of modern timber-framing lie not so much in cost of materials as in superior insulation and speed of erection. Architectural Services claim that 60 per cent of their designs are now built by the prefabricated method. This year's model, curiously claimed to be Northern French in inspiration, is nothing much to look at. But Architectural Services' *Book of House Plans* is packed with ambitious, off-the-peg transatlantic designs for the upper echelons of the middle-class market, many of them designed by Herman York, 'a leading designer of family homes in North America'; they are variously entitled the Pawtucket, the Glendower (very popular), the Kitimat, the Lexington, the Woonsocket, the Phillipsburg, etc. We are undoubtedly going to see more of such houses.

The technical aspects of the show houses are not emphasised at the Ideal Home Exhibition, since the organisers (Angex, a subsidiary of Associated Newspapers) insist that it is not a housing exhibition, being aimed at the pocket of the ordinary visitor. Yet it has always been at least in part a housing show, and there are arguments that this role should be expanded. It is not just that the almost perpetual housing crisis that has existed since the show first started continues unabated. Equally serious is the fact that 'Interbuild', the biennial successor to that Building Trades Exhibition whose clothes Northcliffe stole in 1908, has held its last show at Olympia and is moving to the National Exhibition Centre at Birmingham. London is now without a major regular housing or building exhibition. The Ideal Home Exhibition would be the perfect forum at which to put some of the perennially important questions of housing before the general public. To do so, without jettisoning the commercial element, would be to restore just that touch of altruism and idealism that distinguished the early exhibitions under Northcliffe.

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Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Ghosts

The Cherry Orchard *Nottingham Playhouse*
Tobias and the Angel *Young Vic*
Twelfth Night *Greenwich*

Halfway through *The Cherry Orchard* a tipsy vagrant stumbles out of nowhere and back into nowhere, unsettling the serenity of the countryside. In most productions this apparition is bizarre and rather alarming, a reeling grotesque whose presence tells us less about the society which presumably produced him than about the characters he startles and intimidates, notably the prodigal Madame Ranevsky, who randomly tosses him a gold coin. Not at Nottingham, though. There the translator is Trevor Griffiths and the director Richard Eyre, the selfsame combo which recently gave us *Comedians*, that laugh-in for the politically aware. Their tramp is what he claims to be, a starving Russian citizen, a sickly, skeletal figure with a tubercular cough who accepts the great lady's charity hesitantly, unwillingly, and with a little bow that at once acknowledges his own loss of self-respect and subtly derides the superior status of everyone else. Maybe he's an army deserter, maybe an itinerant worker in search of some ergonomic Oz, maybe just another of the sunken unemployed. Whatever his precise predicament, there's no mistaking the contribution he makes to a production dedicated, above most else, to debating the urgency of social and political change.

Does this mean the play has been distorted in the interest of socialist enlightenment? It may seem so to those still acclimatised to the lilac-tinged nostalgia which clung to English revivals of Chekhov until recently, muffling his distaste for the status quo and masking his confidence in progress. And there would certainly be cause for complaint if Griffiths and Eyre had gone on to caricature the propertied and privileged along the lines recommended by Gorki:

> There's that weepy Ranevskaya and the other former masters of the cherry orchard, as egoistical as children and as flabby as senile old men. They missed their chance to die in time and now they are moaning, seeing and understanding nothing – parasites who lack the strength to latch on to life again.

The main characters, it's true, don't emerge from this production as sharp and stainless as Sheffield steel. I've seen more vibrant Ranevskayas than the fretful, puzzled version Bridget Turner offers us; and Ralph Nossek's Gayev sometimes looks as if he's been wrung half-dry and left to droop from a line of genteel washing. Or perhaps he, and indeed she, would be better compared to ghosts, frail, helpless wraiths doomed even before death to haunt the past that so obsesses them. But that's a judgment with which Chekhov would largely concur, and the production doesn't make it crudely or unsympathetically. There is still force in Ranevskaya's riposte to Trofimov's Gorkiesque wigging: 'You lack generosity, you lack consideration.'

Trofimov himself is the most obvious example of how the play's usual emphases have tilted. In Chekhov's day the character was widely regarded as a mischievous libel on the young Left. Even Gorki thought him a 'miserable student' who 'talks pretily about the need to work and spends his time in idleness'. Theatrical tradition, at least in England, has not had vast respect for him. But Griffiths has restored to the script the suggestion, apparently unacceptable to the original censors, that Trofimov has been expelled from university for his radical activities, and, armed with this history, Mick Ford has surprisingly little trouble glueing together his fractured reputation. Here's a callow, rather priggish young man, but one whose political analyses are substantially correct and whose enthusiasm for the future seems boundless. He leaps on to a wayside bench, a scrubbed, bony skinhead and, brandishing a Bolshevik fist, invites his shining girl friend to reform nothing less than Mother Russia with him: an embryo Lenin, but not without humour, self-mockery and tenderness; the most forceful, persuasive voice on offer, and a plausible person as well. I don't think Chekhov would have disowned him.

Certainly, the result is a play that looks forward with excitement rather than back with regret, one with spring in its boots, not winter whistling down its collar. This feeling of freshness is reinforced by Griffiths's translation, whose contemporary fizz only occasionally spills over the rim of probability. I don't think the aged Firs would swipe back at Yasha with 'up yours, butterballs'. On the other hand, the original insult, 'you're ready for the knacker's yard', seems an improvement on 'I wish you'd go away and die soon', Elisaveta Fen's Penguin version. A less obvious example: there's surely no doubting which is the more pointed of Lopakhin's peasant memories, Penguin's 'it was a good life all right: at least people got flogged' or 'the good old days when you could rely on things – getting flogged, for instance', Griffiths's manipulation of the literal Russian into an ironically-angled English cliché. And isn't 'shit, leaking roofs, moral degradation' a sharper, tougher appeal to the social conscience than 'bad smells, damp and immorality everywhere'? The translation is lithe, speakable and humorous; and, indeed, I can imagine a good deal more laughter being extracted from it than occurs here.

As it is, Anthony Sher has some nicely judged fun at the expense of Epikhovdov, the Clouseau of *The Cherry Orchard*, forever sitting on spikes, squashing hatboxes and mangling the language; but others – well, let's not allow ourselves to be distracted by comic timing when there are more important things to admire. Dave Hill's Lopakhin is a particular success, a gangling, affable fellow with a thick northern accent and a goofy cackle, all of whose screwed-down rage and resentment steams over when he, the son of a serf, is able to announce his purchase of the Ranevsky estate: 'Don't ever laugh at me ever again!' So, in a smaller way, is Malcolm Storry's Yasha, an uppity servant slouching about in a playboy's suit and sprawling on his master's couch in open defiance of the traditional lines of authority. What performances like these do, and do without human sacrifice, is concentrate our minds on property, class, social discord, political crisis, the fading-away of an old order and the absence of a satisfactory substitute for it, matters which, God knows, still preoccupy us today. The effect is not, I think, to diminish the play, still less shrink it into a Marxist tract: it is rather to remind us how large it is, how sweeping its interests and sympathies, how adventurous the interpretations it can safely contain, and how much of it we commonly miss. I, for one, will never be able to look at it in quite the same way again.

I somehow doubt if any theatre will give me a second gander at Bridie's *Tobias*. Even a less ramshackle revival than the one at the Young Vic could not, I suspect, reconcile a cynical age to its genial, whimsical charm, still less to the pi sermon on the merits of domesticity delivered by the Archangel Raphael to the young wife already a-weary of the bouncing protagonist. And why is Tobias, persistently described as small and podgy, played by the slim, athletic David Yip? The point is that he's a very ordinary boy made a man by the perils of his trek through Asia Minor: Mr Yip looked from the very start as if he could shatter any monster fish, bandit or flying ogre with a brisk karate chop.

So to my last revival, a *Twelfth Night* whose bait to the unwary is that its Viola is one of the most handsome performers on our stage and its Malvolio one of the most naturally funny. Alas, Gayle Hunnicutt's tongue dabs uneasily at Shakespeare's words, and Max Wall's actually makes them sound like gravestones stuck somewhere in his dentures. His idea of acting is to heave away at the verse and then to mug ferociously when, once again, it proves intractable. Articulate support from Anna Carteret and Frank Barrie notwithstanding, this is an uncomfortable evening.

Films

John Coleman

Days in Vichy

Section Spéciale *Curzon*
In the Name of the Father *The Other Cinema*
The Cameraman *Electric, 29 King Street*
Eclipse *EMI International, Bloomsbury*

Costa-Gavras has rightly made a name for himself as an anatomist of past, lost causes: *Z* was about the Lambrakis affair, *L'Aveu* centred on the arrest and rigged trial of a Czech ex-minister, *State of Siege* pointed a bunch of accusing fingers at American policy in Latin America. The first two of these entertainments were written by Jorge Sem-

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prun and all starred Yves Montand, twice a hero, once a villain. If they had a fault, which they did, it was that they loaded the scales unnecessarily, leaving us in no doubt as to when to hiss, when to applaud. In the first, and feeblest, the Greek colonels came over as positively laughable. But that Costa-Gavras knows how to hold the attention while unravelling a complicated tale is unquestioned. What one wonders rather is if he and his collaborators don't too easily encourage us to *self*-applause, a righteousness after the event, all the pleasanter when the details have been presented in something like thriller-style. Presumably the counter to this objection would be a loud 'lest we forget . . .'. In many ways, the latest Costa-Gavras registers as his freshest to date. Semprun is back as scriptwriter but Montand is absent; and I knew nothing whatsoever of the bleak, shameful fiddling with justice it pursues to a bitter end. *Section Spéciale* is set in Vichy France over a few days in late August, 1941: the title refers to the establishment of an extraordinary court, retroactively granted Draconian powers by the hasty signing of a new and illegal 'law': the immediate justification for this was the need to find six scapegoats after a German naval officer had been shot, before the Germans themselves started taking and executing hostages.

The heart of the film lies in the wearing down of various key-members of the judiciary, the twisted morality brought to bear by which indignation was converted into acceptance. The veteran Louis Seigner is magnificent as the weakening, bamboozled Minister of Justice, letting himself be persuaded the *boches* will shoot 100 high-ups if his consent is not forthcoming. And so it goes, with the rare man standing firm, from top to bottom: first, the ticklish business of finding a president for the Special Section, then four judges, public prosecutors, defence lawyers. In an angry scene, one Cournet refuses to preside: Bénon (Claude Pieplu), on his third, young wife ('they say he dyes his hair . . . even uses powder' is whispered in the corridors), readily accepts. The even nastier matter of digging up six victims proceeds, to be selected from men – communists, anarchists, Jews – already tried and sentenced. A basketful of dossiers is slapped down: 'These are the Jews.' A folder is riffled through. 'This one?' The camera comes in close on the papers. 'No, this one is better.' And a man's fate is decided. 'You are mobilised . . . we are all mobilised,' cries Bénon, beating down objections as the judges take a break between one scandalous mistrial and the next. The surrounding action moves from an opera house in Vichy (*Boris Godunov* and Pétain's broadcast curtain speech, exhorting all patriots to greater servility) to the killing of that officer in the *métro* (a slow-motion escape by the young killers) to the supreme awfulness of the court room, closed to the public: here Costa-Gavras momentarily loses us, angling for pathos in some flashbacks to the past of a couple of the victims (a petty crook gaily waltzing with his Pauline, little Trzebrucki buying a passport). These indulgences apart, the piece – consummately cast and played – takes its cumulative toll. The guilty men went free after the war, a last voice-over tells us: 'Reasons of state, as always.'

If Costa-Gavras eagerly seizes on a few chances for surrealism (notably, in mud-packed, steam-bathing officials summoned while taking the cure, a grand wife chasing after an escaped chicken in a grander hotel), *In the Name of the Father* emerges unashamedly from that other world Jean Vigo created in *Zéro de Conduite*. This excellent retrieval, Marco Bellocchio's third film, made in 1971, fancifully depicts life above and below stairs – with rebellion simmering – in a sort of Catholic crammer's for rich rejects. The youths are locked in to their cell-like rooms at night; most of the priests seem mad as hatters; Pius XII has just died and there are hints of a new order round the corner. Bellocchio, agreeably enough, shows more interest in what is round the bend (one may read the piece as emblematic of the state of Italy 1958-9, but its face-value is already full of strange rewards). A Rasputin-like missionary, tortured by the Chinese, arouses the lads less by his lisped message than by the inside of his mutilated mouth, into which they gigglingly gaze. Of the wrenched-out tongue, still extant, one Transeunti (Yves Beneyton) asks, 'Is it pickled or smoked?' This tall blond youth quickly establishes himself as a ringleader, coolly offering a gun to a fellow-student so that he may shoot his importunate mother, doing his damndest to sabotage the school play (after a moment's silence, the priests steal his thunder by clapping), trying – also vainly – to provoke the loonie servants, led by Lou Castel of Bellocchio's first film, *Fists in the Pocket*, into a communal revolt. However deliberately, the highly personal and persuasive chain of shop-logic events, a comic nightmare of adolescence, is snapped some time before the end, when Transeunti drives off with a servant who thinks himself from another planet. But Bellocchio is a born film-maker and now let's have his second, please, *La Cina è Vicina*, also unaccountably neglected.

With some justice, Buster Keaton regarded his move from independent production to MGM in 1928 as 'the worst mistake of my career': and yet *The Cameraman*, made the same year, is surely one of his best pictures. Direction is credited to Edward M. Sedgwick Jr but the result is Keaton's all the way. He plays a street tintype photographer

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who falls for sparky Sally (Marceline Day), desk-girl at MGM Newsreel; blows his savings on a pawnshop movie camera; and after the inevitable heartbreaks, succeeds in bringing back sterling footage of a Chinatown tong war. He is helped in this by one of the greatest tiny monkeys in movie history. On the way to getting the girl and a last, mistaken strut through a tickertape welcome which is actually for Lindbergh, there are vintage moments: his mad race down four flights to the telephone and, when she finally rings, his madder one through miles of traffic to catch her crossly hanging up: title – 'I'm sorry if I'm a little late'; some protracted and marvellous improvised trouble as he and a heavy both try to get into bathing suits in the same exiguous cubicle; his superb, basilisk stare when he loses aforesaid suit in the pool and eyes the bloomers of a large lady entering the water; some nonsense with a recurring cop in a storm (this could almost be the genesis of Gene Kelly's 'Singing in the Rain' number); and the brilliant choreography of that tong war itself. The story goes that MGM kept this as a training film for aspirant comics for years: I'll buy it.

Eclipse, written and directed by Simon Perry, produced by David I. Munro, is a baffling all-British enterprise located in north-west Scotland, with Tom Conti all a-twitter as live Tom and his dead, bullying twin, Geoffrey. Flashbacks are frequent, there was probably a murder, a cat certainly got killed in an oven. Tom concludes enigmatically in bed with Geoffrey's drinking wife (attractive Gay Hamilton).

Television

Ian Hamilton

Dad's Amy

It has been noted that Jimmy Carter must love his little daughter Amy very much; after all, he hired a murderess as her nanny and has already booked her as the first woman to be shot into space. Studying the owlish mite the other evening, as she sat beside Big Daddy during the *America Salutes Jimmy Carter* celebrations (BBC-2), I could well see that any father of hers would need a more than average boost of job-fulfilment. As the entertainers smiled and salaamed, Jimmy strenuously basked, his dentistry white-hot with triumph, and yet you always felt that he was edgily aware of little Amy; stony and contemptuous, she indeed seemed to be viewing the proceedings from another planet, and the harder Jimmy smiled, the sourer she became, as if to say: I've seen the schmuk grin his way through crap before, but this *must* be the limit.

And so it was. An hour and a half of sustained unctuousness, with occasional digressions into none too adept performance. We had the dog-eyed waif Paul Simon setting the tone with his liltingly expressed welcome for 'a new era of righteousness and dignity' and from then on it was just a question of who could grovel deepest, of who could think of something *cleaner* to hope for than the last guy. Sadly, even Muhammed Ali came in on his knees and delivered himself of a not evidently satiric paean to the Chief; indeed, his humiliation was completed by almost getting himself upstaged by a Puerto Rican comic. No one hitherto had known that there were such things as Puerto Rican comics – just another sign that things will be different under Jimmy.

'We don't show ejaculation or penetration,' boasted the editor of the magazine *Hustler* in last week's *This Week* (Thames) but even so the poor fellow has been sent down for 25 years for publishing obscene material. Larry Flynt sees himself as the purveyor of 'good dirty fun' and he encourages contributors to 'write about sex the way we all used to talk about it'; the trouble is, he plies his trade in Ohio and the Cincinnati public prosecutor clearly never talked, or even thought, the way Flynt did. His one regret about getting Flynt convicted was that to pull it off he'd been forced to read the magazine; his face a rictus of disgust, he itemised the loathsome contents tit by tit and declared it all a threat to family life: 'You can't talk about good dirty fun when you attack Santa Claus and depict Mrs Claus as a sexual object.' The interest of the programme was less in the fairly predictable clash between porn and anti-porn than in the steps Flynt has taken to win some kind of intellectual respectability for his 'struggle'. He likes to point out that 86 per cent of suppressed material in the Soviet Union is suppressed under the obscenity laws, and also has deep thoughts about the obscenity of war – indeed, he has gone to the length of putting out a magazine called *War*, in which numerous bloodied corpses are portrayed, and making sure that it came into the hands of his oppressors. Such efforts have endeared him to 'the liberal establishment' and the climax of his campaign so far has been a full page ad. in the *New York Times* with distinguished highbrow signatures supporting his right to be as dirty as he likes. All in all, he seemed a happy man – sales of *Hustler* have rocketed, his case is under appeal and will probably stay that way for years, and he's in big with the intellectuals. He likes intellectuals: 'That judge . . . he's so stoopid he thinks manual labour is a Mexican.'

Crossroads Educational Supplement, commented a friend after the first instalment of *Headmaster* (BBC-2), and that's just about the way this wan series has developed. The final episode last Monday plodded through the pros and cons of corporal punishment, proposed a contest between teacher-care and parent-care and explained how when such a contest ends up as a draw the child ends up in care. Earlier worries have been about new teaching methods versus old, bureaucracy versus individualism, heart versus mind. The characters we're meant to like have been presented as decent, helpless and perhaps a little out of touch; the ones we're suspicious of are neat, fast-talking and 'in many ways' correct. The trouble is that all these conflicts have been burdened with dialogue of near-anaesthetic banality, and the quite gifted cast has throughout worn that 'how am I supposed to say *this*?' look that we know so well from series born of far less worthy aims. Frank Windsor in particular has seemed perpetually on the brink of phoning Barlow.

The Ambassadors was another stylish Lost World of Manners essay from the BBC, in its way every bit as cosily escapist as a Western. What do the millions make, one asks, of a drama that turns on them believing a weary, witty middle-aged American in Paris is cruelly shocked to learn that couples who aren't married now and then perform the dirty deed? At best it's quaint, but when the innocent in question looks as ravaged as Paul Scofield, indulgence becomes strained. Scofield acted beautifully, but could never quite register the necessary spark of simple-mindedness; whatever he said, his worn face was against him. Still, this was a marvellously efficient production; even the tricksy stuff – dissolving from well-known Impressionist paintings into a real-life continuation of their dramas – was achieved with quiet fluency, and didn't in the least seem pleased with itself.

Art

John Spurling

Sermons in Stone

The Art of Bernard Leach *V & A*
Agnes Martin Paintings and Drawings *Hayward Gallery*
Artists at Curwen *Tate Gallery*

I am as keen to improve myself as the next person, but don't care to be told how to do it, so my first instinct is to ignore the atmosphere of moral regeneration which surrounds the work of both Bernard Leach and Agnes Martin and try simply to assess the goods as pots and paintings respectively. It is not so easy. Of course the beauty of Leach's pots can be partly accounted for in the practical terms he himself suggests in *The Potter's Challenge* (Souvenir Press £3.50): a matter of curves and angles, slips and glazes, colours and textures; of the generous convexity of a belly flowing suddenly into the brief concavity of a neck and out again to a full lip; of the pleasing asymmetry of an hour-glass shaped vase in a pale green-grey speckled glaze, whose lower half is slightly narrower than its upper; of a bold leaf-and-branch pattern which rushes diagonally up a tall, elegant vase, emphasising both its upward and horizontal movement, as if the piece were still turning on the potter's wheel. The base of a jug's handle, says Leach, 'should come off the side like the branch of a beech tree. I like to see where the angle is, not just the slick S-curve'. He notes appreciatively the 'sturdy knob' on the lid of a Chinese Sung pot but his own knobs are equally liable to make the fingers twitch and so are those knobless tea- and coffee-pot lids – shiny, almos

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weightless domes resisting the heavy downward swell of the pot proper.

But there is more to Leach's art than connoisseurship. As well as looking like useful objects, they promote a strong *idea* of usefulness; that coupled with agelessness. They are – especially the recent monumental pieces – symbols of their kind, traditional emblems of domestic civilisation and, in a period when the objects actually in use are likely to be mass-produced, they carry the additional weight of commenting unfavourably on what our civilisation has become. Such comment is explicit in Leach's writings and in writings about him, implicit in his methods of working – using, for example, wood-fired rather than electrically-fired furnaces – and in the uniqueness of the finished things, as irreplaceable as they are breakable.

The moral atmosphere, then, is inescapable. Bernard Leach is not just a good potter, he is a man who believes that good pots are made by a quality he translates as *thusness*: 'thusness is what everybody can contribute to life in his own way by being himself, by being as he was made . . . you as you really are.' He is a preacher and teacher who asserts the classical values of craft, individuality within a continuous tradition, the 'inner world of the quiet spirit'. The debased word 'beauty' is an essential term in his vocabulary, expressing an ideal from and towards which he works, something which can be analysed in its outward manifestation as a pot, but only alluded to in its inward role as the potter's *raison d'être*. It is a notion – 'Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,/Makes that and the action fine' – perhaps easier to accommodate in a grand old man of 90 than in a still active artist and in theoretically practical objects than in those intended purely for contemplation.

All the same, without it there is no way of explaining the remarkable effect of Agnes Martin's paintings. She was born in 1912 in Saskatchewan but her reputation has only recently grown to the proportions of a cult. The paintings are abstract and minimal, with evocatively earthy names: *Islands, Stone, Starlight, Mountain, Grass.* What is this Stone, this Mountain, this Grass? A six-foot-square creamy yellow ground covered all over, except for the extreme edges of the canvas, with a tiny square grid drawn in pencil; a pale yellow ground of the same size crossed by pencilled double horizontal lines in groups of four; a pale grey six-foot canvas with a pencil grid whose horizontals are further apart than its verticals. So far as they go these are complete descriptions, but they do not convey the peculiarity of the coloured grounds, an opacity infused with light, or the odd delicacy of the pencilled grids, at once rigid and yielding, or the interplay between the thick, smooth texture of the oil paint and the insubstantiality of the pencil marks.

'Reality, the truth about life and the mystery of beauty are all the same and they are the first consern of everyone,' writes Martin in the text of a recent lecture, whose wholesome naïveté is made somewhat sickening by the catalogue's reproducing it, page by page, in the artist's handwriting. Yet to look at the paintings is to feel undeniably improved: physically rather than spiritually, as if one had eaten health-foods or ridden a bicycle, not found a new meaning to one's life.

Visual improvement with moral overtones has been the hallmark of the Curwen Press since 1920. 'Get the SPIRIT OF JOY into your printed things,' proclaimed an early publicity shot. To this end the Press called on the services of artists such as Edward Bawden, Eric Ravilious, McKnight Kauffer, Ardizzone and Sutherland to illustrate books and design wallpapers and posters, and then in 1959 set up a studio to produce lithographs for Ceri Richards, Moore, Hepworth, Hockney et al. Apart from Paul Nash's outstanding illustrations for *Urn Burial* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, the exhibition at the Tate celebrating a copious gift of Curwen lithographs is, to say the most, a mild experience. The tone of the catalogue, however, is fulsome – obviously congratulations are due all round. That's the insidious thing about moral regeneration through art: the artist may sweep the room in the correct spirit, but can he resist his natural lust for applause?

Weekend Competition

No 2455 Set by A. Boteman

The verse form is the message – or is it? Competitors are asked to rewrite familiar passages of poetry in a highly inappropriate verse form – 'Mother Hubbard' in Popean couplets, 'Ode to a Nightingale' reworked by Edward Lear – while preserving the subject matter intact. Twelve lines or so by April Fool's Day.

No 2452 Set by E. O. Parrott

Competitors were asked to write a 150-word essay on English prose style. (There *was* a catch: you couldn't use the same word twice.)

Report by Len the Unlucky

My, but you're a clever bunch. I expected a razor-thin folder this Friday – a few straggling entries with the usual petulant footnotes ('What a rotten comp', 'Lousy bloody comp', 'What a bummer – Get Parrott!'). Not a bit of it. You *do* respond to a challenge, don't you? It must have been a murderous exercise, but your entries sustained their panache right to the end (some of you contemptuously featured an 'it', a 'the' or an 'is' in the *very last phrase*). I could fill the page with honourable mentions. I'm proud of you all. £7 each.

When it comes to English prose style, *quot homines tot sententiae.* Thus, whereas Johnson thought Addison approached the ideal – elegant without being ostentatious, familiar but not coarse – many modern critics view Wodehouse as *nulli secundus* by virtue of his *sancta simplicitas* and unerring eye for *le mot juste. Mutatis mutandis,* Pascal's adjective *'naturel'* expresses most aptly what we hanker after yet *ipso facto* render unattainable. *Entbehren sollst Du!* How, then, can spontaneity coupled with *gravitas* flow from one's pen? Given *carte blanche,* unbounded inspiration, unlimited time, Roget's *Thesaurus,* strong black coffee, sharpened pencils, heavy bond paper, suitable subject matter et cetera, does *la douce langue maternelle* obligingly dispose itself into harmonious (because instinctive) word pictures? You must be joking. *Lasciate ogni speranza,* ye scribblers: disillusioned, informed opinion *nem. con.* foretells total failure, i.e., stilted, polysyllabic, recherché verbiage, *sine die* . . . unless a deadline threatens. QED.

C. VITA-FINZI

Good English prose, according to 'Q',
Is accurate, stylish, will always eschew
Journalese, jargon, take a transitive verb,
So students of literature ruthlessly curb
Ornamentation – for shovel say spade –
Be concrete, not abstract,
appropriate – persuade!

Study the scriptures, authorised version,
Read Greek and Latin rather than Persian,
Shun circumlocution, prefer direct word,
Never write excrement (substitute turd).
Stiff upper-lipped with true British phlegm,
Murder your darlings, blue-pencil each gem.

Choose definite images, visual, hard,
Vide Will Shakespeare from Stratford,
our bard.
Reflect that you neither can touch, no, nor see,
Instance, nature, case, degree.
Masculine writing, solidly massive,
Scores high above mere stationary passive.

Considerate writers, without doing harm,
Remember their manners – style equals charm;
They know perspicuity clarifies thought.
Deny understanding – communicate nought.

Dear Mr/Ms Parrot, I've taken some time,
Forsaken my essay, used uncertain rhyme,
Because Quiller-Couch pronounced
(somewhat terse),
NOW ASSIDUOUSLY PRACTISE VERSE.

ELLA HEWISON

An infuriating stylistic device known as 'elegant variation', popular among Victorian school-marms whose livelihood derived from instructing refined young ladies concerning literary creation, should be avoided like any plague. Examples are easily found: if you use 'surrounding country' once, never do so again; employ instead 'circumambient terrain', 'immediate environs' or another locution bearing similar meaning. Teachers who recommend this expedient presumably intended, by eliminating 'flat' repetition, to improve texture, even add layers of significance. They were mistaken. It guarantees banality, taxes the sensitive reader's patience and invites misunderstanding, while breaking every canon governing economy. Why utilize two words where one suffices? What notable writer has ever sought a variant that does little more than hamper smoothly flowing prose, risks ambiguity for subtlety, unwittingly puts tediousness before clarity? Jane Austen? No! Swift? Certainly not! Henry James? Ah, but great masters can work magic with techniques spelling death in lesser men's hands.

PETER ALEXANDER

Favour short sentences; longer ones appear anachronistic, contrived, engendering gratuitous

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complexity, confusion even. Choose simple words; eschew flatulent verbosity. Avoid tautology; adjacent juxtaposition of unnecessarily superfluous redundantly adjectival epithets – is not needed. Cast out neologisms; horrendous examples bring down uptight readers. Exclude split infinitives – to generally bolster the grammatical accuracy up. Introduce *direct speech;* 'But for Christ's sake, don't *over*do! O.K.?' And *indirect* . . . A famous author has said it should be used sparingly. Use capital letters; unlike e.e. cummings, graphic designers, pseuds everywhere . . . Employ punctuation marks; their omission puzzles serves relatively little purpose Im against solecisms myself probably passing fad only if you ask me. Omit vulgarity; make sure you're into linguistics re taste. Honesty rewards; charlatans' artificiality immediately apparent. Never plagiarise; literary plunder reveals superficiality, gutlessness, dilettanteism etc. . . . Enter NS comps; costs nothing, tightens style, encourages brevity, elicits humour, occasional remuneration – good fun too, editorial ballockings notwithstanding.

TIM HOPKINS

Essays on English prose style? God pity poor Parrott! He sure talked out of turn that time. Fancy reading all those dull entries! For my money hardly any subject could be more boring. Still, let's try. An historical survey, perhaps. How begin? Well, our battered, misused native tongue first started wagging, you might say, when Beowulf finally swallowed his diphthongs. Thenceforth, two voices were there, endlessly alternating. One, springing from Elizabethan euphuism, anatomized melancholy, celebrated urn burials: the other, much favoured by establishment figures, industriously plumbed unfathomable depths, letting sense drown sensibility. Through seemingly endless ages, cold classical perfection, alias flatness, reigned. At last, from Germany, Gothick raptures returned, romanticism bidding long lost unconscious images re-emerge. Victorian reaction duly followed, eventually overwhelmed in modernism's permissive chaos. Future developments no man (sorry, person) can foresee, but general collapse seems a likely outcome, as telepathic computerised communciation systems render language superfluous.

WALTER WATERSON

A discourse by George-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, enlightened 18th-century critic, pronounces authoritatively, *Le style est l'homme même.* But let not French origins obscure universality. Bemusing, yet rewarding, experience has taught, undeniably, that this is also English prose's prime feature's definitive definition. Man's extremely wide characteristic diversity undoubtedly manifests itself through exactly correspondingly countless modes of written expression. Appropriately, nowhere could such an axiom be better exampled than from NEW STATESMAN Weekly Competitions: dotty, peculiarly British contests exhibiting highly literate society's mocking parodists, talented-taloned lampoonists, acid-sharp satirists and occasionally wittily original artists, who parade variegated literary efforts, often, incidentally, enviously modelled on more commercially successful practitioners. However, no matter what eccentric pen-names, outrageous syntax, bizarre vocabularies, double meanings or imaginatively vulgar themes toiling competitors employ, their true identities are invariably revealed in subtle stylistic quirks. Did Martin Fagg (naming only several) ever believe he hoodwinked anybody?

DAVID TIDY

Tony Miles

Chess

No 25 **The Effect of Titles**

It often seems that the quest for master and grandmaster titles has an adverse effect on one's play. Instead of playing each position logically and trying to find the best move for the situation, one often tends to calculate how many points are needed for the priceless 'norm' and play accordingly. Thus when requiring 50 per cent from one's remaining games and having an advantageous position there is a tendency to look for the clearest way to draw. The results are predictably disastrous. Consequently when the desired title has actually been achieved it can produce a sudden improvement in one's results.

Take for instance Ray Keene. After finally gaining his grandmaster title at Haifa he played in two tournaments in Spain. In the first, at Alicante, he took first place with 7½/11 ahead of Piasetsky (Canada), O. Rodrigues (Spain) and Martin (Spain) 7, Robatsch (Austria), Hernandes (Cuba) and Pomar (Spain) 6 etc. In the second, at Orense, he again shared the lead until two rounds from the end and finished equal third, unbeaten, with 7/11. The leading scores this time being Rodrigues (Spain) 8, Browne (USA) 7½, Keene and Gheorghiu (Rumania) 7, Pomar (Spain) and Hernandez (Cuba) 6.

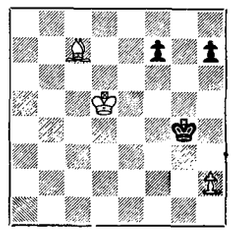
This week's game is one of his wins from Alicante, against the American junior Tisdall who won this year's Hastings Challengers tournament.

White: R. D. Keene. **Black: J. Tisdall.**

1. P-QB4, N-KB3; 2. N-QB3, P-K4; 3. N-B3; N-B3; 4. P-K3, B-N5; 5. Q-B2, B x N On 5. . . . 0-0; 6. N-Q5 gives white a slight edge. **6. Q x B, Q-K2; 7. P-QR3, P-QR4.** Preventing 8. P-QN4? **8. P-QN4!** Apparently not. Now 8. . . . P x P; 9. P x P, R x R; 10. Q x R, N x P; 11. Q x P or 10. . . . Q x P; 11. N x P favour white and 8. . . . P-K5 is met by 9. P-N5. **8. . . . P-Q3.** The game Keene-Janetschek went 8. . . . P-Q4!? 9. BP x P, N x QP; 10. Q-N3, N-N3, (Keene mentions the possibility of 10. . . . B-K3; 11. B-B4, P-R5; 12. Q-R2, N(Q4) x NP; 13. P x N, N x P; 14. B x B, N x Q; 15. B x N and considers that the black pawn mass gives him the advantage); 11. P-N5, P-R5; 12. Q-B2, N-R4; 13. B-N2 *and the* bishop pair gave white the edge. **9. B-N2, B-N5; 10. P-N5, B x N.** A faulty concept. 10. . . . N-QN1, though unpleasant, is better. **11. P x B, N-Q5; 12. 0-0-0! N x P?** Fatal. He must try 12. . . . N-K3. **13. B-N2, P-K5; 14. B x N, P x B; 15. KR-N1.** The pressure against KN7 is intolerable. If 15. . . . R-KN1; 16. Q x NI or 15. . . . N-R4; 16. Q-Q4! or 15. . . . K-B1; 16. R-N3. **15. . . . N-K5; 16. Q x NP, R-KB1.** If 16. . . . 0-0-0; 17. Q-N4ch. **17. Q-Q4, Q-K3; 18. P-Q3, N-B4.** Or 18. . . N x P; 19. QR-B1. **19. Q-B6, Q x Q; 20. B x Q, P-B3; 21. P x P, P x P; 22. K-B2, K-Q2; 23. R-N3, K-B3; 24. R x P, P-Q4; 25. B-Q4, N-Q2; 26. R-R3, P x P; 27. P x P, P-QB4; 28. B-B3, N-N3; 29. R-R4, P-B3; 30. R-QN1 Resigns.**

Problem 25:

Black to play. Has he any drawing chances? Entries to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than Wednesday 30 March.

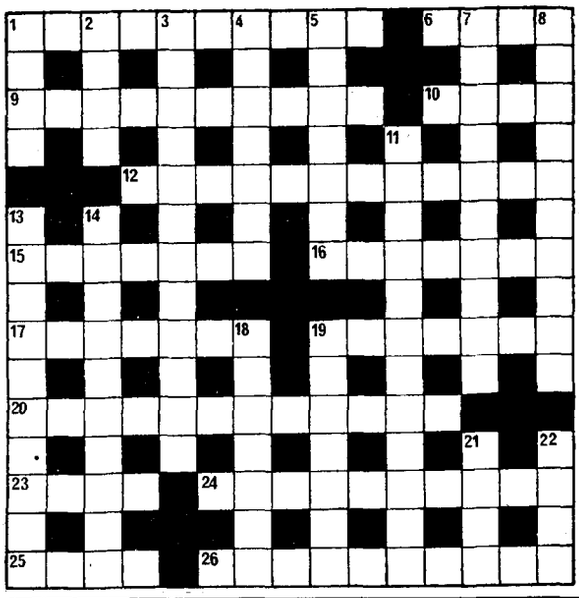


Solution to Problem 23:

1. P-QR4! Resigns since 1. . . . B x P (1. . . . B-R3; 2. R x BP *is hopeless*); 2. Q-R3! B-N4; 3. R x B! Q x Q; 4. R-N7ch and P x Q wins a piece.

Weekend Crossword 1207

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1207, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 29 March.



ACROSS

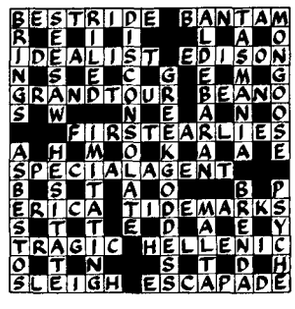
1. Teacher who gives useful tips? (4, 6).
6. Quarrel which would be made plain for the man with the suit (4).
9. Passed away without a soul being dejected (10).
10. Piano tune which is not a solo (4).
12. Convincing proof that business house is in company with state (12).
15. Drag girl all round the ring, being stronger (7).
16. 'We will nothing pay For —— our own noses' *(Cymbeline)* (7).
17. Bits of Latin which are under revision in grammar school (7).
19. A poet would leave what is most serious unfinished (7).
20. In fact cousin turns out to be advocate of family relationships (12).
23. A place for lions, it was once British (4).
24. It indicates a letter is missing, when the hoper is upset after a delivery (10).
25. The governor has lost an arm in the crowd (4).
26. Awareness of the future when one cries about being in the money (10).

DOWN

1. The dog for the fog? (4).
2. Incautious eruption (4).
3. Food for a high born lady (4, 2, 6).
4. Those following in second row are firmer (7).
5. 'With a woeful ballad Made to his mistress' ——' *(AYLI)* (7).
7. Cities laid in ruins, but they are not Roman (10).
8. Periods when torn in pieces in battles (10).
11. When one vehicle follows another over a rise perhaps there is a place to stop (12).
13. Means of transport for the acting tutor (10).
14. Parts when about to slip up, but nevertheless yields (10).
18. One who leaves out the captain (7).
19. Creation is seen differently among soldiers (7).
21. Unobstructed since there is nothing to shut in (4).
22. Goddess who is put in the best bedroom (4).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1205



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Charles Osborne: Literature Director
Jonathan Barker: Poetry Librarian

Opera

Scottish Opera

Spring 1977

visits

BARROW
CREWE
SUNDERLAND
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LIVERPOOL
YORK
EDINBURGH
LODZ (POLAND)
WARSAW (POLAND)
PERTH
ABERDEEN
NEWCASTLE

with a repertoire taken from

The Marriage of Figaro, The Magic Flute, The Merry Widow, Macbeth, The Turn of the Screw, Don Pasquale, Fidelio, Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg, Jenufa, The Rape of Lucretia.

Leaflets giving details from

Scottish Opera
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Tel: 041-332 6431

Exhibitions

GANYMED GALLERY, 11 Gt Turnstile, WC1. 405 9836. Original lithographs by Lowry, Moore, Boyd. 18th & 19th cent. prints by Daumier, Gavarni, Greuze, etc.

WOMEN ARTISTS present cartoons, etchings, paintings, tapestries. Hilda Bernstein, Gertrude Elias, Heinke Jenkins, Lea Grundig, Hallna Korn, Jacqueline Morreau, Maureen Scott, Monica Sjoo, Mary Wolfard. Swiss Cottage Library, NW3. 21 March-27 April. Weekdays 9.30-8 p.m. Sats to 5 p.m.

Meetings

YVES BONNEFOY, Professeur associé au Centre universitaire de Nice, Poet, will give a lecture and Poetry Reading (in collaboration with the Poetry Society): 'Réflexions sur la poésie' on Tuesday 22 March at 6.15 p.m. at the French Institute, Queensberry Place, SW7. Tel: 589 6211 ext. 38. Admission free.

ROSAMOND WOLFF PURCELL will be giving a lecture on 'polaroidsat'. The Polytechnic of Central London, 35 Marylebone Rd. NW1, in the large Lecture Room on 24 March from 7-9 p.m. Admission free. Presented by the Photographers' Gallery.

CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY. Roy Shaw, General Secretary of the Arts Council, on 'Socialism and the Arts', 23 March 7.30 p.m. 5 Tavistock Place, WC1. Collection: all welcome.

FOCUS ON JEWISH LIFE IN THE USSR. A series of lectures on Soviet Jewry. Tonight: 'Meetings with Jewish Activists in Russia' and 'Soviet Jews integrating into Israeli Society'. 8.15 p.m. at Y.P.Z. 523 Finchley Road, NW3. Admission 50p.

SOCIALIST SOLIDARITY with Charter 77 Public meeting. Chair: Dave Bowman (NUR). Speakers: Robin Blackburn, Lawrence Daly (NUM), Prof. A. J. Liehm, Ian Mikardo MP, Ernie Roberts (AUEW), Marian Sling. Wednesday 23 March, 7 p.m., Unity House, Euston Road (nr Euston Sq. station).

'THE MUSIC of the Whirling Dervishes' – a talk with music by Jeffrey Somers. Thursday 24 March at 7 p.m., Small Hall, Friends House, Euston Road, NW1. Admission 50p.

THE ENERGY OF LIFE: THE LIFE & WORK of Dr Wilheim Reich: Dr Eva Reich (his daughter), Dr Myron Sharaf & David Boadella discuss the pioneering contributions to psychotherapy, physics, biology & human awareness of this controversial figure, at Friends House, Euston Rd, NW1, Fri. 29 April, 7.30 p.m. Tickets £1.50 at door or tel. Quaesitor 01-452 8489.

BUDDHIST SOCIETY, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1. Sat. 19 March 3 p.m. 'Open Day'. Tues. 22 March 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. Wed. 23 March 6.30 p.m. 'Mahayana & Theravada Buddhism' – two separate Study Classes. All welcome. Send s.a.e. for full programme.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE, 54 Holland Pk, W11. Sun. 20 March 'Ideal of a Universal Religion' by Swami Bhavyananda at 5 p.m. All welc. Vedanta mag. 40p.

THEOSOPHY Commemoration Meeting. Sun. 20 March 8 p.m. 'A Great Theosophist: W. Q. Judge'. S.a.e. pamphlet, book list. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

THE BLANCHE COLEBROOK MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Rt Hon. Stan Orme MP talks on:
'Industrial Democracy — Post Bullock'
Tues. 22 March 7.30 - 8 p.m.
All welcome.
Young Fabians
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THE IMMINENT REAPPEARANCE OF THE CHRIST — THE WORLD TEACHER — AND THE MASTERS OF THE WISDOM

from the esoteric Teachings of the Master D.K. to Alice A. Bailey for the New Age of the One Humanity.

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FRIENDS' HOUSE, Euston Rd, NW1. Fri. 18, Tues. 22, & Tues, 29 March all at 7 p.m.

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Free, Donations Welcome.

'Two Canadas In One'

A Talk by Patrick Keatley, Diplomatic Correspondent for *The Guardian*.

Tuesday, 22 March 1977
at 6.30 p.m.

Focus Group
Royal Commonwealth Society
18 Northumberland Avenue
London WC2

GAY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

GCM aims to help the whole Church to re-examine its understanding of human sexuality, and to work for a positive acceptance of gay relationships. Membership open all men and women, gay and non-gay.
For details of our 32 local groups write to **The Secretary, 15 Bermuda Road, Cambridge.**
A.G.M. Sat. 26 March. 10.30 a.m. Hinde St Methodist Ch. (Bond St tube).

Courses

FRENCH INSTITUTE, 10-week Intensive Day Course in Oral French, commencing 25 April. Interviews from 21-25 March & 18-20 April. Write to 14 Cromwell Place, London SW7 (s.a.e.) or Tel.: 589 6211 Ext. 45

WEEKLY ACTING COURSES: Thorndike Theatre, Leatherhead and Chepstow Theatre Kensington. Syllabus: 38 Hillsboro' Road London SE22. 693 7159 or 946 2161.

ARBOURS TRAINING PROGRAMME fo Psychotherapists. A new course starts Sept '77. Write for further details to: Arbour Training Committee, 55 Dartmouth Par Road, NW5, enclosing a 9" x 3" s.a.e

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(Universities of Paris and Lille)
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THE ARVON FOUNDATION

will be running 3 courses in April open to the general public, two at its Yorkshire centre and one at its Devon centre.

In Yorkshire:
1. 4-9 April:
Poetry
Tutors: ADRIAN HENRI
LIZ LOCHHEAD
Reader: CAROL ANN DUFFY

2. 11-16 April:
Poetry & Prose
Tutors: MARTIN BOOTH
PETER SCUPHAM
Reader: JON SILKIN

In Devon:
1. 15-20 April:
Painting & Writing
Tutors: JOHN FAIRFAX
KIT BARKER

If you write **Poetry** or **Fiction**, o you **Paint**, and you feel you could benefit from professional advice write for further details to:
Bill Hughes, Lumb Bank, Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire, HX7 6DF.

Courses continued on p. 379

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